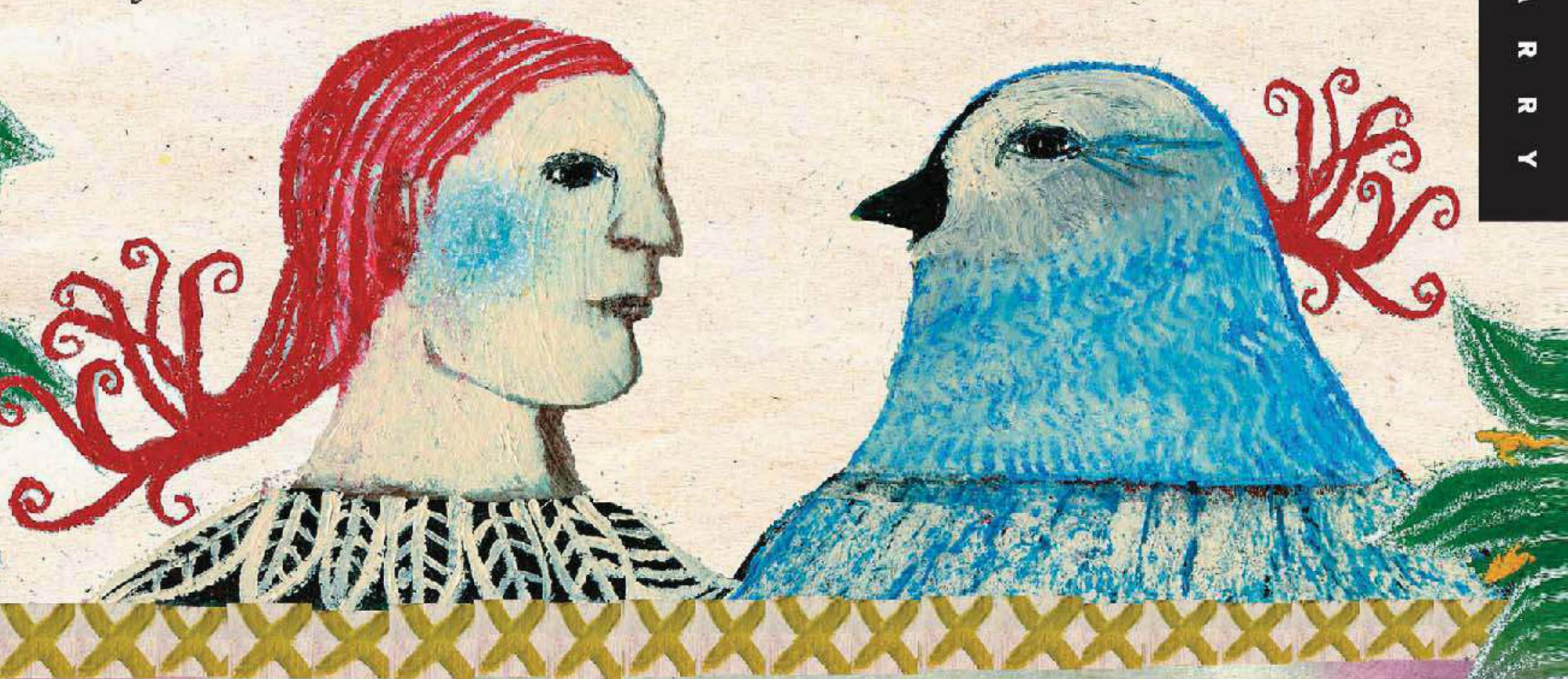


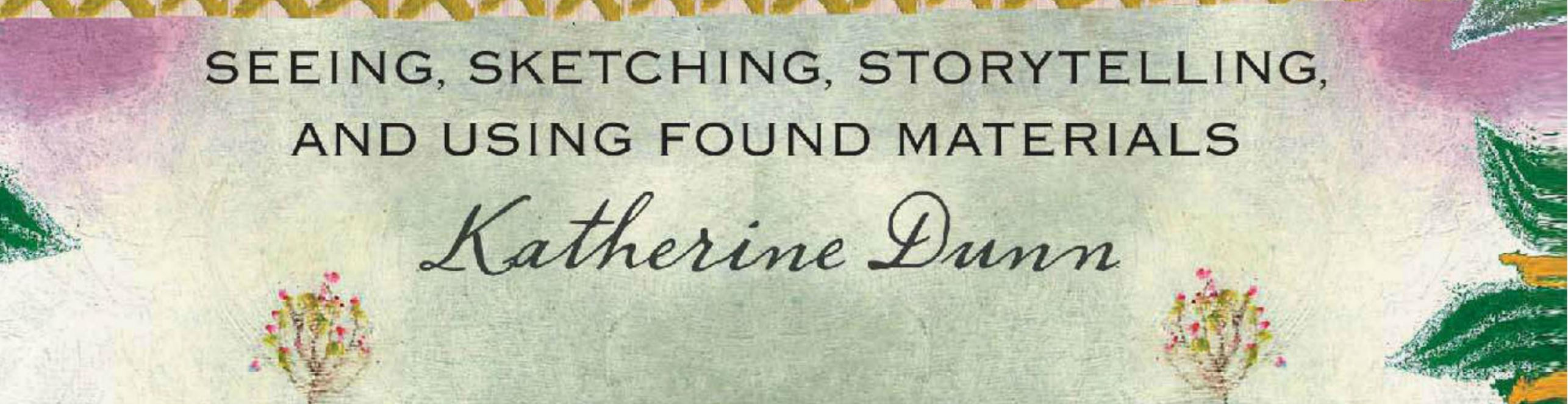
CREATIVE ILLUSTRATION WORKSHOP

for Mixed-Media Artists



SEEING, SKETCHING, STORYTELLING,
AND USING FOUND MATERIALS

Katherine Dunn



**CREATIVE
ILLUSTRATION
WORKSHOP**
for Mixed-Media Artists



"Every artist was first an amateur."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

CREATIVE ILLUSTRATION WORKSHOP

for Mixed-Media Artists

BEVERLY MASSACHUSETTS

QUARRIES

SEEING, SKETCHING, STORYTELLING,
AND USING FOUND MATERIALS

Katherine Dunn

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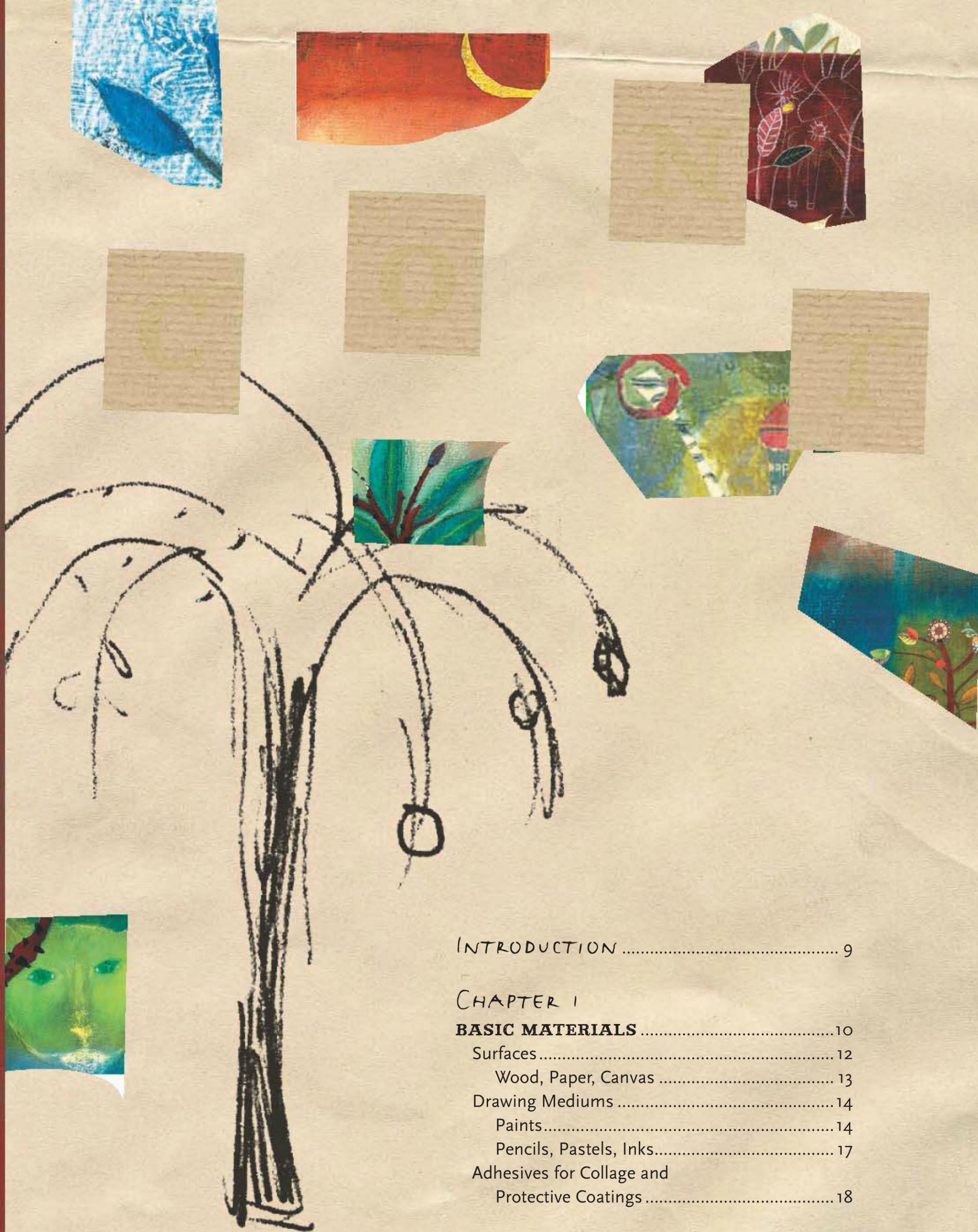
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And Then the Wind Blew In, acrylic/collage on pine board.

"Primarily, what we carry around with us is
a memory of childhood, back when each day
held the magic of discovering the world." — Isamu Noguchi

Introduction

On any given day there are stories all around you, and as an illustrator and artist, you get to decide which ones to explore and possibly share with the world. An apple falling from a tree, a child skipping down the road, an old man sitting in a park—all these visual moments can lead to your next illustration.

Let's face it: Since the dawn of mankind, humans have illustrated their stories and feelings through drawing, whether on a cave wall or the ceiling of a chapel. As children we drew all the time, sharing our fears and joys or stories of imaginary friends. As adults that joy of expressing ourselves seems to get pushed aside. I often hear people say, "I can't draw." One of the goals of this book is to allow you, no matter what your level of drawing skill, to open your mind to drawing as a way to share a story, a feeling, or an inspiration. Why? Because stories entertain, teach, communicate, inspire, and heal. Not only the artist is transformed—so is the viewer. An illustration can be as simple as a beautiful drawing of a bowl of fruit or as detailed as a full-bleed image from a short story—but both came from some visual inspiration. As you read this book, I hope you begin to take more joy in the fact that your daily world is a giant library of visual inspirations.

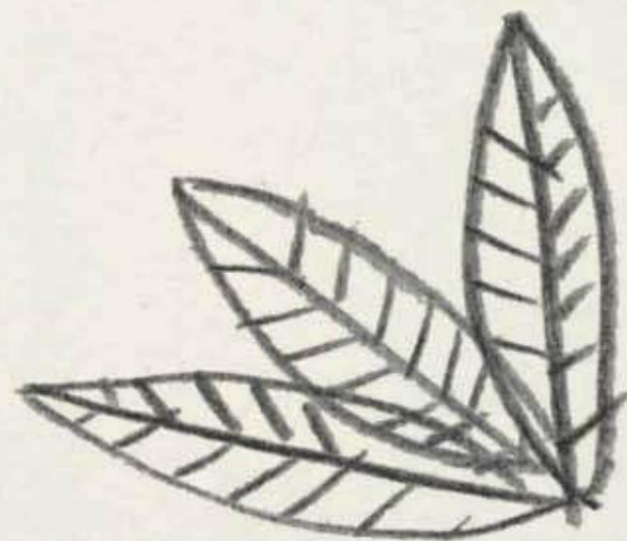
While many mediums can "illustrate" a concept or feeling, this book will focus on illustrating ideas through traditional drawing and painting mediums. I do address the use of computer programs to enhance illustrations, since I use this technique in much of my commercial work. It is a wonderful tool to have in your bag of tricks as you develop your style.

Everyone has their own style and voice. My work has always been heartfelt and emotive, both in color and subject. We'll look at simple techniques to capture the initial essence of an inspired moment, so you can save it for a later time when you are back at the studio. We'll look at the many sources of inspiration from our own backyards as well as books, people, muses, and simple objects.

Illustration not only tells a story, it can create a visual answer to your own internal mysteries. One of the chapters in this book presents an exercise in which you can explore a personal life experience through a series of illustrations created from one piece of paper. It allows you to focus on the fluid process of creation instead of focusing on the end result. Like life, it's the journey that matters as much as the destination.

You will also be encouraged to think about simple, everyday items as visual and textural resources for techniques and illustrations. Sometimes all we need is a fresh perspective on the ordinary to make us see how "extra" ordinary it really is.

Appreciating your surroundings as a library of color, texture, and emotion is an inspiring way to go through life. Creating illustrations from that inspiration is a rewarding way to share your feelings, stories, and observations of the world. I hope that by reading this book, you'll be inspired to look at the magic in your own world and translate it into an illustration.



Chapter 1

Basic

MATERIALS

In addition to experimenting with quality papers, canvas, and paints, be open to working with what some might tell you are second-rate materials—such as newsprint. Working with an open mind about everything, from materials to subject matter, can lead to fresh techniques and discoveries for your work. Your choice of surface and material should reflect you and your lifestyle at the moment. If you are in a confined area, then smaller, more intimate surfaces might hold more appeal. Certain moods and experiences might push you to paint or draw on large surfaces. Or you might like the idea of using the interior pages of an old book as an art surface to tell a story.

Don't hold yourself back from trying new surfaces and sizes. When I first started out, I was intimidated by large canvases. But eventually I just had to work big, and I still go back and forth between small, intimate pieces and large canvases, depending on my mood and the project at hand.

Physical limitations might also affect what surfaces and materials work best for you. Large surfaces require a more physical style of working. Smaller pieces allow you to be very quiet and intimate with your subject. There is no right or wrong ... it's your vision and expression.



"I work in whatever medium
likes me at the moment."
—Marc Chagall

SURFACES

A surface is anything you can paint or draw on, including canvas, paper, Masonite, or a pine board. You can also paint on a paper bag or an old door. Each surface takes each medium differently, so you will need to experiment to suit your taste and your budget.



Acrylic and inks on newsprint | The hazy green circles were achieved by applying a white gesso wash over the acrylic painting. Note how the black ink is bleeding due to the newsprint surface.

TIP Instead of recycling your old phone book, you can staple about ten pages together, gesso the top layer, and use it as a drawing surface for pen and ink pencil illustrations. The text can show through in areas, adding context and texture to your work.



Acrylic and pastel on 36-inch (1 m) stretched canvas. Stretched canvas is durable and well-suited to painting in a physical manner, which is usually the technique for large abstracts. Experiment with the different types of canvas—cotton, linen, and so on—to find one that suits your taste and materials.

Paul Klee painted on newsprint throughout the war, as it was all he had.

WOOD, PAPER, CANVAS

THE FOLLOWING SURFACES ARE SHOWN IN THIS BOOK:

Pine board can be purchased at local home and garden stores in board lengths and then cut to size. The surface is porous and takes acrylics wonderfully. It is also great for collage. Wood pieces can be hung without framing, saving you or an art buyer some money. It's also sturdy and easy to move around in your studio.

Newsprint bought at an arts and crafts store or your local newspaper can take inks, pastel, pencil, and paint (although the number of layers you can use is limited because the paper cannot withstand too much moisture). Newspaper makes good collage material and is useful for adding words to another surface. It is very inexpensive, readily available, and for these reasons, also good for practicing since it's not "special."

Watercolor paper is durable and takes acrylic well. It can be repainted many times. You can also embellish and alter paper with sewing and collage. The thickness of a sheet of watercolor paper is indicated by its weight, measured by either grams per square meter (gsm) or pounds per 500-sheet ream (lb): the greater the weight, the thicker the sheet. For acrylics and other mediums, consider 140 lb (300 gsm) as a minimum for using multiple paint layers. If you plan on doing lots of layers and rough application techniques, 300 lb (640 gsm) paper is probably preferable. Visit your art supply store and get a feel for the different textures and weights.

Canvas is durable and resilient, and it comes in a variety of sizes. I suggest you purchase prestretched and gessoed frames for ease. Many types of canvas are available, such as cotton and linen, and each has its own qualities and price ranges. Canvas allows you to work large and doesn't require a frame for hanging. It also allows you to repaint the surface many, many times. I have repainted some canvases years later.

Drafting paper works well with pencil, ink, conté, and pastel. It is wonderful for layered illustrations, which are described in chapter 5.



These acrylic portraits were done on old wood beams from the artist's barn. Consider using recycled wood as a surface. Shop at antique or salvage yards for old doors and shelves that can be painted on. Another benefit is that they don't require frames.



Pine board is durable and easy to ship. Purchase it in board lengths and have it cut to the size you want. The way pine takes paint, inks, and pastels is texturally appealing to many artists.

DRAWING MEDIUMS

This book focuses on working with acrylic paint, inks, ballpoint pens, pencil, pastel, and collage. Some watercolor is also used. These mediums can all be incorporated into one piece or used individually, depending on your needs and vision. I say this often, but it deserves repeating: Experiment! Every brand is slightly different. Your needs and personality will lead you to materials that are right for you.



Here is an array of paints and pastels on the artist's (messy) desk. Remember that acrylics dry quickly, and are well suited to painting in many layers. They also are water-based and can be washed up with soap and water.

TIP Consider incorporating latex house paint into your work. It is especially useful when you work on large surfaces. In addition, you can mix acrylic color into the paint. Apply the latex paint onto your surface, dab an acrylic paint color onto the latex/surface, and rub it in with a cloth to provide a wonderful “hazy,” ethereal quality to the image.

PAINTS

Acrylic paint dries quickly, making it perfect for layering techniques and collage. It also allows you to make many changes more quickly than with oil paint. Since it's water soluble, you don't need solvents for thinning or cleanup. Solvents and turpentine can be dangerous to use without proper ventilation. (Any of the exercises in this book can be done with oil paints if that is your preferred medium.)

Acrylic gesso is usually applied on the surface before a painting is begun; it is a “ground,” and it fixes the surface so other paint and materials will adhere better. White gesso can also be used as a white color to mix in with your acrylic paints to lighten their value. You can also purchase black gesso.

Many acrylic brands are available. I work with Golden and Liquitex. Heavier bonded acrylics come in tubes or jars and can be mixed with water to create washes. You'll find that the same color can vary slightly from brand to brand, so you will need to experiment and find your preferences. I purchase the base colors that I use most often—such as cream, black, Payne's gray, white, browns, and olives—in wide-mouth jars, which allow me to dip my brush right in to get more paint. I purchase the smaller tubes for pricier colors and for the ones I use in accents, such as cadmium reds.

TIP Acrylic paint dries quickly, so try keeping some small plastic bags at your work area. You can place one over the open jar to save the time and energy of repeatedly putting the lids back on. You can also lay the plastic bags over paint you've spread out on a palette to mix.

I also have a variety of Winsor & Newton watercolor tubes on hand. These can be used as washes or mixed over acrylic for unusual effects.

You can also experiment with very inexpensive paints, such as children's poster paint and cheaper brands. You'll find these useful for processes such as washing a large area with an initial color, but you'll also discover that cheaper paints often don't mix well or react oddly with varnishes and other mediums.



Acrylic and pastel, collage on folded city newspaper | Note how the text of the paper shows through in areas. Newspaper doesn't last hundreds of years like canvas might, but its soft, absorbent quality is appealing to many.



Acrylic wash over tissue paper | The hairs of the goat were created with watercolor sticks and pastel. The top border is made with collaged elements. When working on tissue paper, you have to work quickly and are limited to how much waterbased medium you can apply.

PENCILS, PASTELS, INKS

A myriad of pencils, pastels, and inks are available. If you plan to incorporate them into your work and are using acrylic, you will need to seek out waterproof varieties—unless you are open to bleeding and chance textures, which you might desire in abstract pieces.

You can read all the books in the world on materials, but the best way to learn what works is to buy a variety of mediums and experiment. Books will tell you that non-oil-based pastel won't work well over acrylic, especially if varnish is applied, but I do this all the time by adding light varnish sprays onto the chalk/pastel, letting it dry, and then adding a light coat of varnish again. I repeat this until I have the desired effect, such as on the goat image you see here. So experiment and find the brands and materials you can manipulate to your advantage.

Pastels, inks, and pencil can add detail, color, line, shading, tonal ranges, washes, or words. Certain inks and pencils will bleed more, which might be a welcome result or not. Oil pastels can be used over acrylic to paint words, bold lines, or shapes. Watercolor sticks used over acrylic or directly on paper can create a watercolor effect with some control for line. Try creating your initial drawing with just oil sticks or pencil, let it dry, and then add subtle washes of watered-down ink or acrylic over it. Experiment! I like to follow the philosophy of, "Who says?" When someone states an opinion or what appears to be a fact, I ask myself, "Who says?" What works for me might be frustrating for you and vice versa.

For more detailed parts of an illustration, pens or pastel pencils can clarify finite details, like an eyebrow or fingernail. I always have a variety of pens around, including basic Sharpies, for detailed work.

TIP A variety of sharp objects at your desk can be handy for writing or carving words into your piece. I keep a box of nails and pins at my working table to use for inscribing into a light layer of acrylic, showing off a darker layer underneath. You'll be surprised at the difference in lines between different-size nails, so keep a variety available. Other good and inexpensive word inscribers are knife tips, pushpins, and sewing and knitting needles.



Different mediums produce different results. Experiment! Test your medium to see if it is waterproof by dabbing a bit of water on it. Sometimes you might welcome the smudging that occurs if it's not water soluble.

TIP Dab a small amount of Liquitex varnish over ink or pencil to give it a protective coating, allowing you to proceed with the next layer of the painting.



A wine label for a distributor was created on magazine scrap paper with acrylic, ink, and pastel. The client liked the torn edges, feeling them to be "earthy" and raw, like the earth the grapes came from. This is a good example of incorporating nonwaterproof ink into an acrylic painting; I lightly varnished the ink before I proceeded so it wouldn't bleed too much.

ADHESIVES FOR COLLAGE AND PROTECTIVE COATINGS

Acrylic adhesives attach material to your working surface. All the pieces in this book use Liquitex semigloss varnish for collage elements and protective coatings. You can also get a very heavy gel adhesive with texture added, such as pumice, which creates a gritty quality. Or you can buy varnish in a spray adhesive. I try very hard not to use this, as it is bad for the environment and my lungs. If you do use it, wear a mask and be sure you have good ventilation. Sometimes I have to use it to spray a tiny amount of protective coating over a small element so it won't smudge—usually pastel.

TIP If you do a lot of spraying with fixatives, consider investing in a spray booth, but still wear a mask. Consider using Liquitex gloss varnish in the bottle as much as possible instead of spray varnish. Spray cans should never be thrown out unless totally empty.

Liquid varnish comes in a squeeze bottle, making it easy to adjust the amount of varnish you require. A 12-ounce (340 g) bottle can last a long time. Varnishes come in matte or gloss finishes. You can also purchase varnishes in large gallon (3.8 L) buckets, helpful for using large brushes to apply items to large canvases.

TIP For collage, apply varnish with a brush or finger to the working surface where you want to place scrap. Place scrap on the varnished spot and press lightly until it stops moving. Some papers might wrinkle, tear, or change values, but often this element is welcome in the finished art.

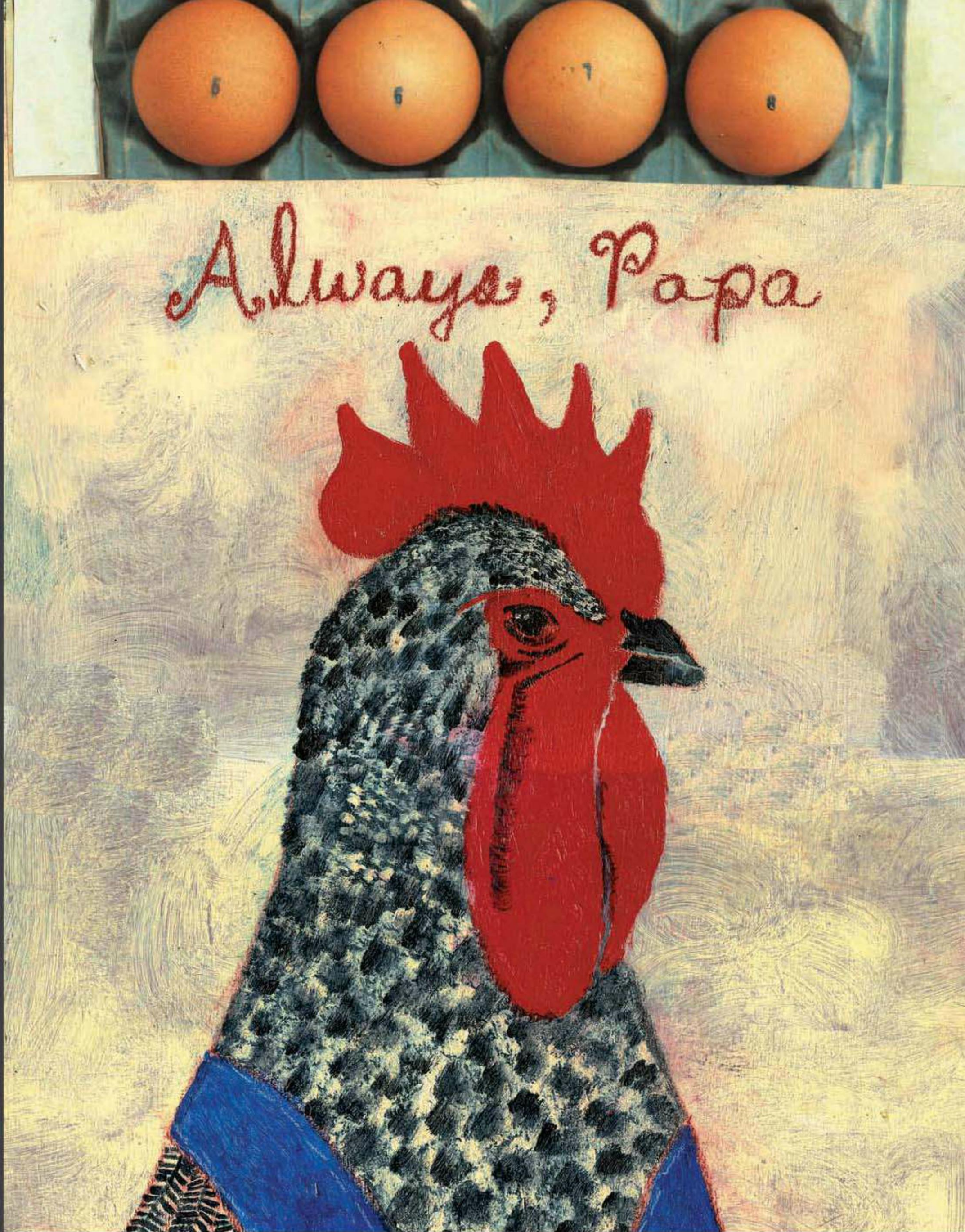
If you use acrylic, I recommend that you apply varnish over your finished pieces no matter what surface you're working on. Since acrylics dry slightly duller than their wet state, the varnish saturates the final color and also protects the painting. A heavy application can create a milky appearance, so you will need to experiment to determine the amount you need.



Liquid varnish comes in manageable squeeze bottles. Apply with fingers or a brush. A handheld size might be more comfortable and easier to use than a large jar of varnish. The hardware store has a variety of inexpensive 1-inch-wide (2.5 cm) paintbrushes. They're great for applying varnish, saving your more expensive brushes from too much abuse.



This piece is a series of portraits created for a fundraiser event. The butterfly is magazine scrap varnished down to the notebook paper. The purple dress is shoe polish, another unique medium to experiment with color and "sheen."



Acrylic. Collage and pastel on wood | The words "Always, Papa" were applied over the acrylic background and then dabbed with a finger with acrylic varnish. That way, when I brushed on the final varnish coating, the letters wouldn't smear.

Chapter 2

Illustration



STORYTELLING

Every picture tells a story; every face has a history. Every tree has a beginning and an end. Drawing and painting your world is a wonderful way to share your stories or explore stories you didn't know existed until you sat down to find them. Characters, plots, and scenes are everywhere. Come along and explore.





CAPTURING THE ESSENCE

es·sence [es-uhns]

—noun

1. the individual, real, or ultimate nature of a thing especially as opposed to its existence:
A painting that captures the essence of the land.

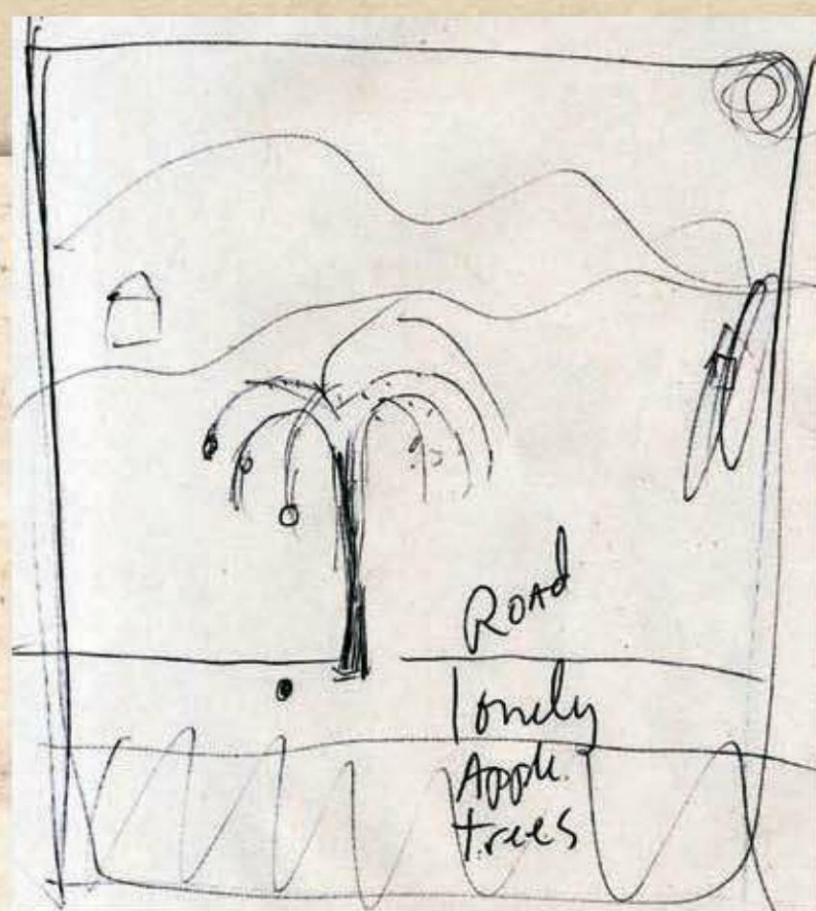
For starters, let's take the mystique out of finding that initial idea. The blank page can create panic in some artists, novice or otherwise, but if you look at the world right at your feet as a library of images, ripe with stories, then you can be confident that the ideas are always there for you. The trick is to notice when you are inspired and make note of it: somehow, somewhere. You want to capture the essence of your inspiration and not necessarily the whole story that comes with that essence.



STAGE 1:

Commission of a cat.

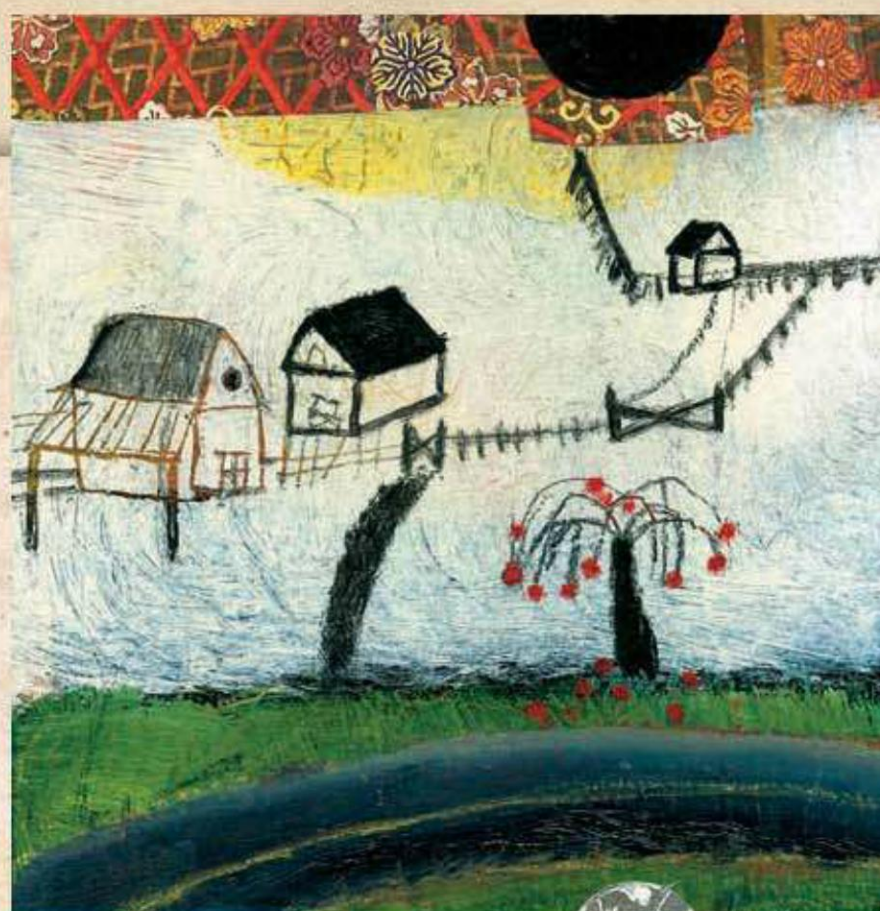
In this commission of a cat, it was all about her attitude but also her white feet. Later when I sat down to do the actual painting (seen on the opposite page), I surrounded her in mirrors, since she was very beautiful and knew it. When you do your next pet portrait, write out a sentence for yourself that captures the personality of that animal before you begin.



STAGE 1:

A lonely apple tree.

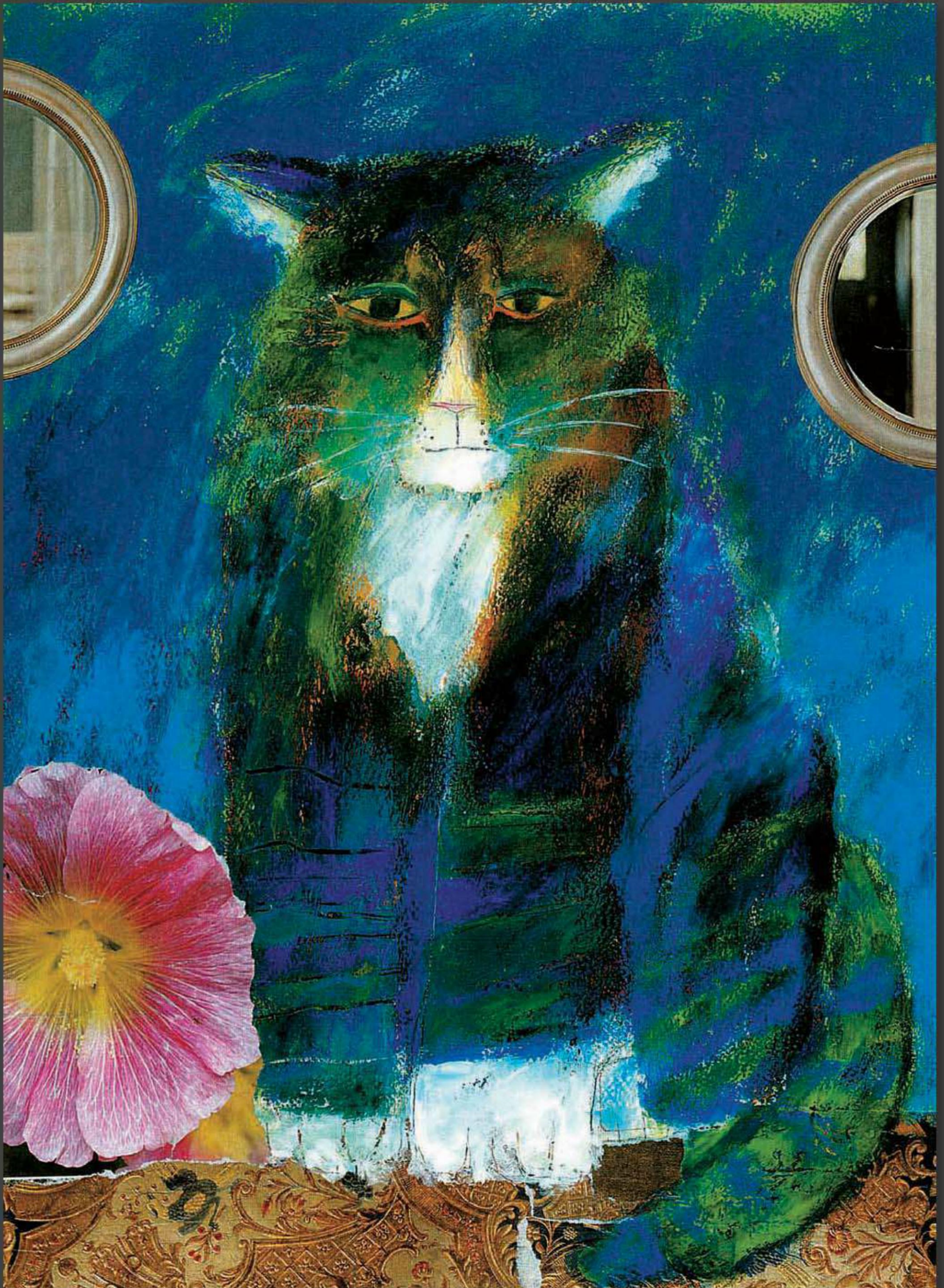
This was caught quickly in my car—a lonely apple tree on the country road.



STAGE 2:

A lonely apple tree.

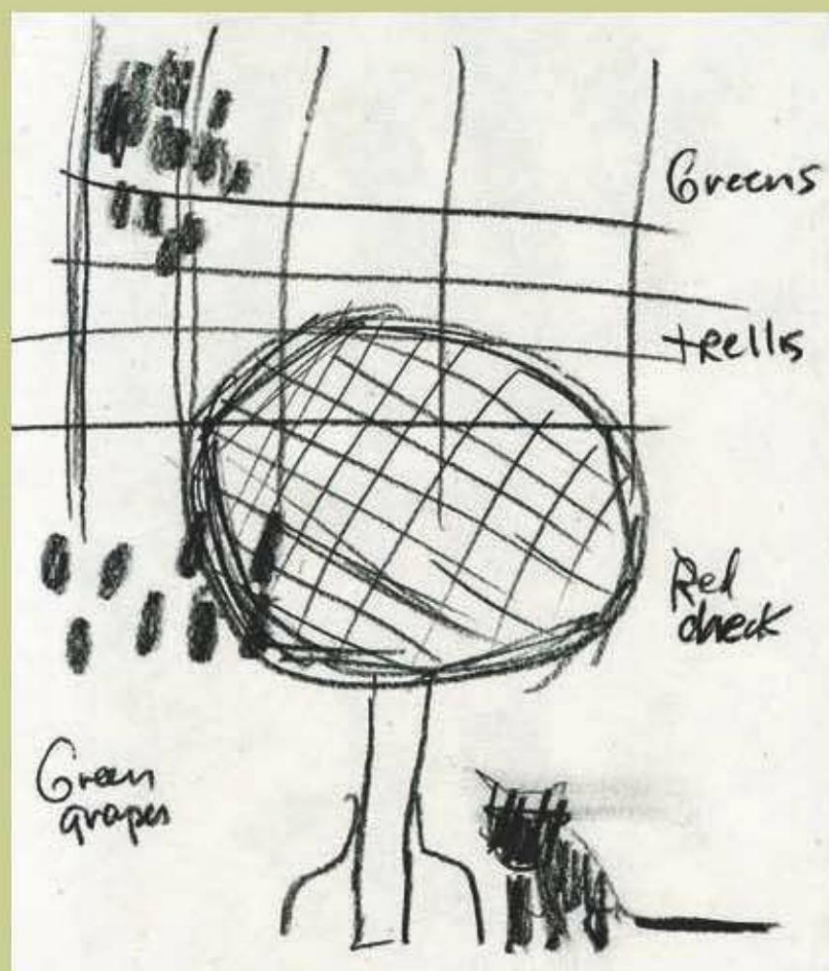
Later in my studio, the lonely apple tree gets a farm to feel less lonely. But the essence and personality of the tree remain.



STAGE 2:

Commission of a cat | Fully developed illustration.

Not all your sketches or doodles will end up as final illustrations. Certain details of a rough may end up in a final piece of art days or weeks later.



STAGE 1:

Crude sketch of first inspiration.

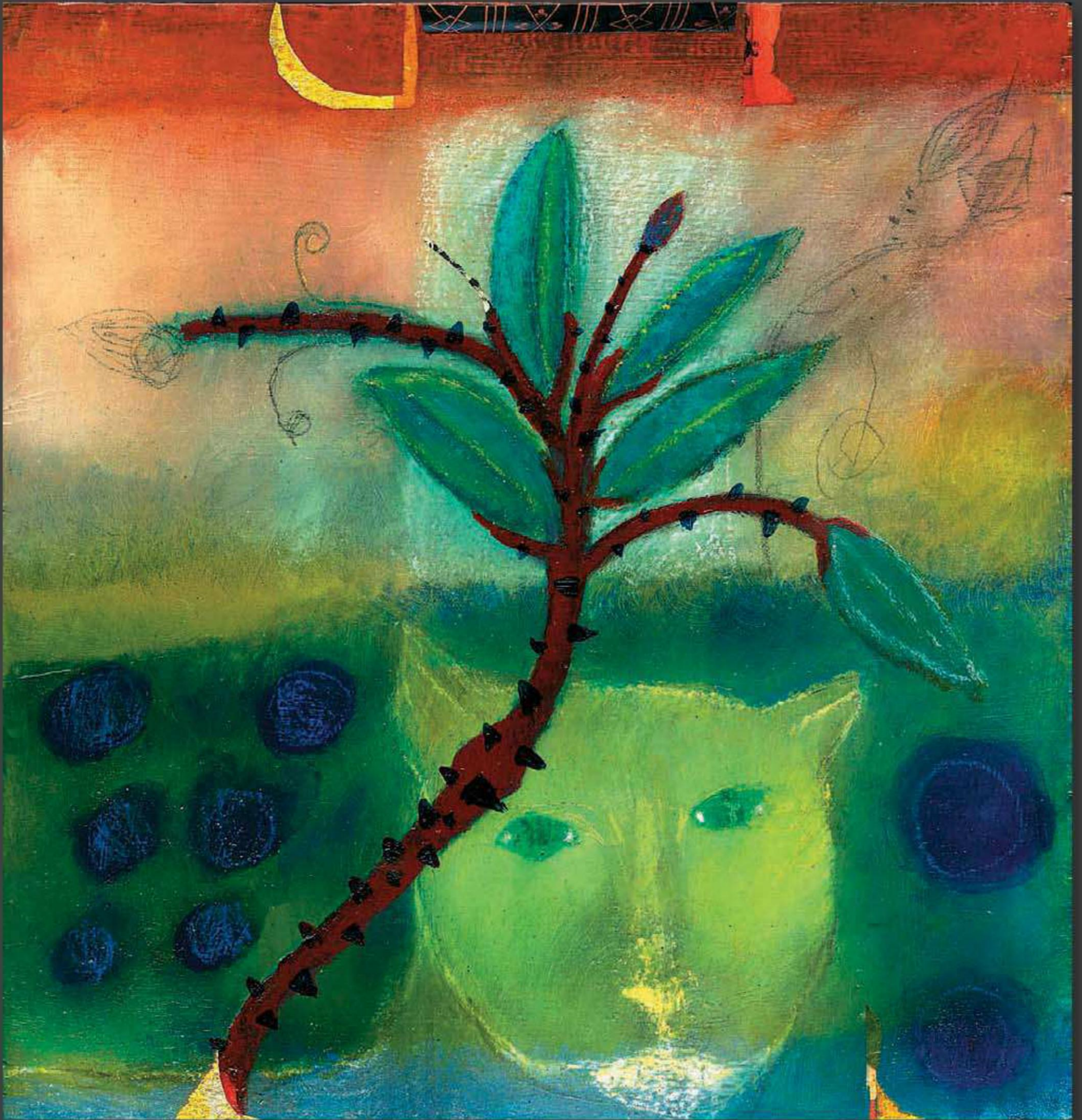
My studio is surrounded by doors and windows, so I can look out at nature and animals all day long. I can walk out onto a front courtyard, with grapevines and trelliswork, where cats often lounge. The first stage shows the initial crude notes I took. The second image shows an intermediate color sketch. It is still crude, but it's a little more developed than the first sketch.

That sketch never made it to a final stage, but you can see the lush leaves, the cat, the grapes all merged into one in the piece on the final. I don't know the time span between these, but I think inspiration soaks into you and can be brought to the surface at any time—especially when you sit down to paint or draw.



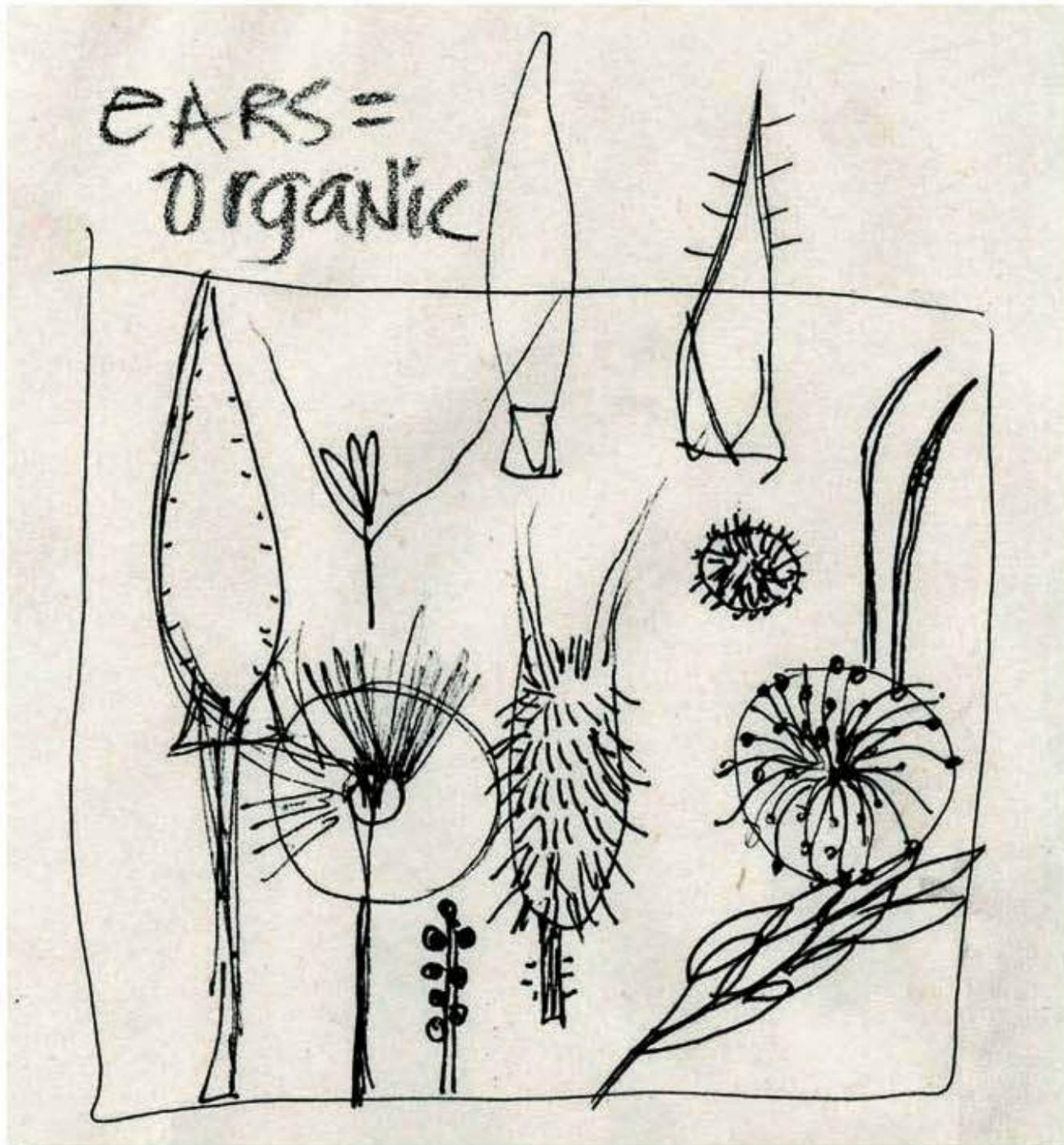
STAGE 2:

Intermediate color sketch for layout | You can choose how much detail you want these initial sketch ideas to have. I like to get to the actual painting quickly, since my work is so inspired by color.



STAGE 3: FINAL

Cat, acrylic/mixed media on wood.



The initial idea capture is just that: initial. Don't get bogged down in details at this stage. Capture the essence of what you are seeing and focus on the details of the illustration later.

Get a word down on a pad of paper or get a line image down on a sketch pad—whatever it takes to jog your memory back at your studio when you can focus on the idea in depth. Maybe you see a woman in a black dress holding red flowers. The image inspires you somehow, but you don't know why. Jot it down: black dress and red flowers. Back at your drawing table days or weeks later, you can read the note and work through the idea in greater detail, from memory and from the feeling, or essence, of why that image initially grabbed your eye and heart.

Here I set out to just capture the beauty of the various shapes of the garden, including my beloved weed friends. The donkeys of our farm were in the background.

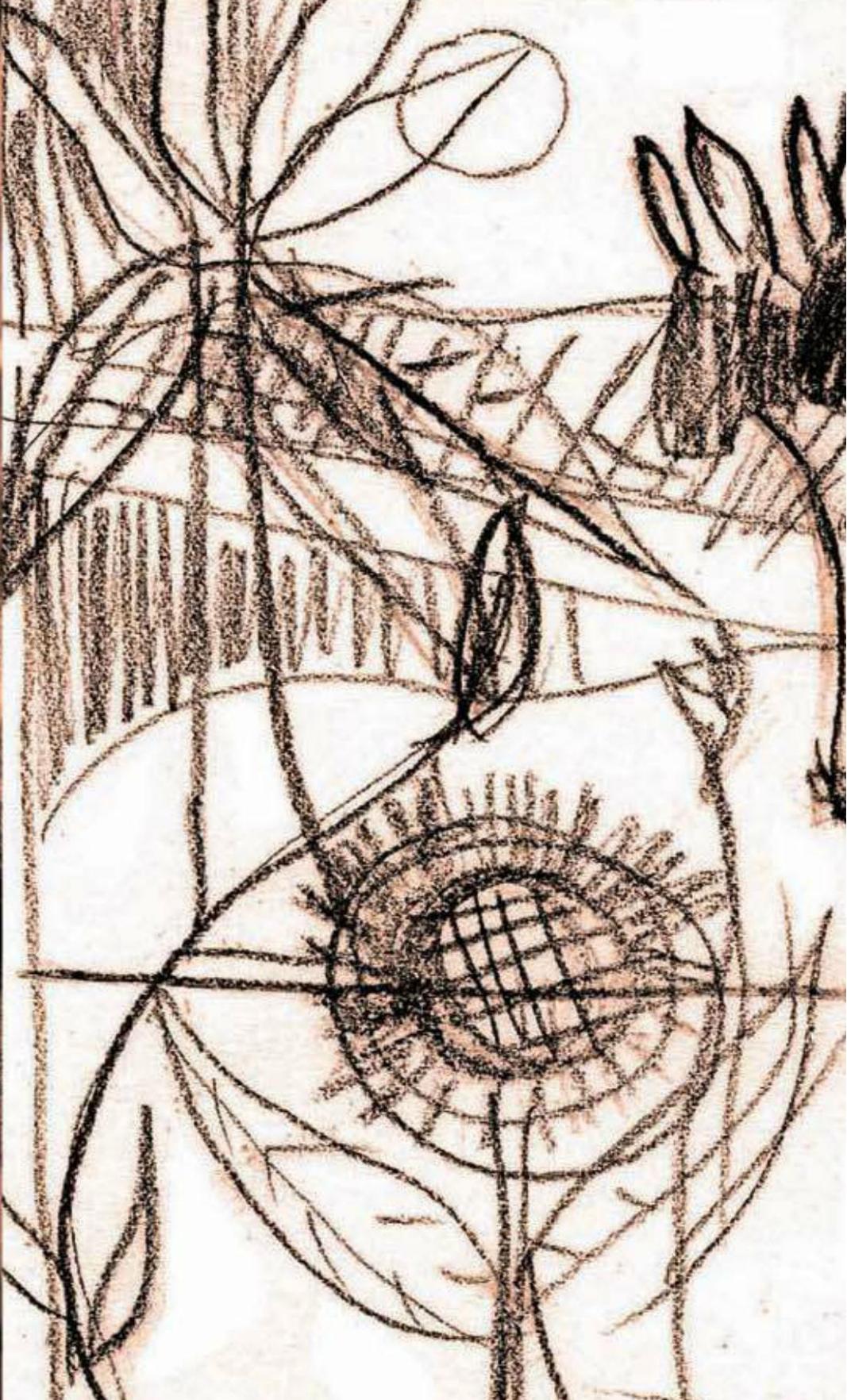
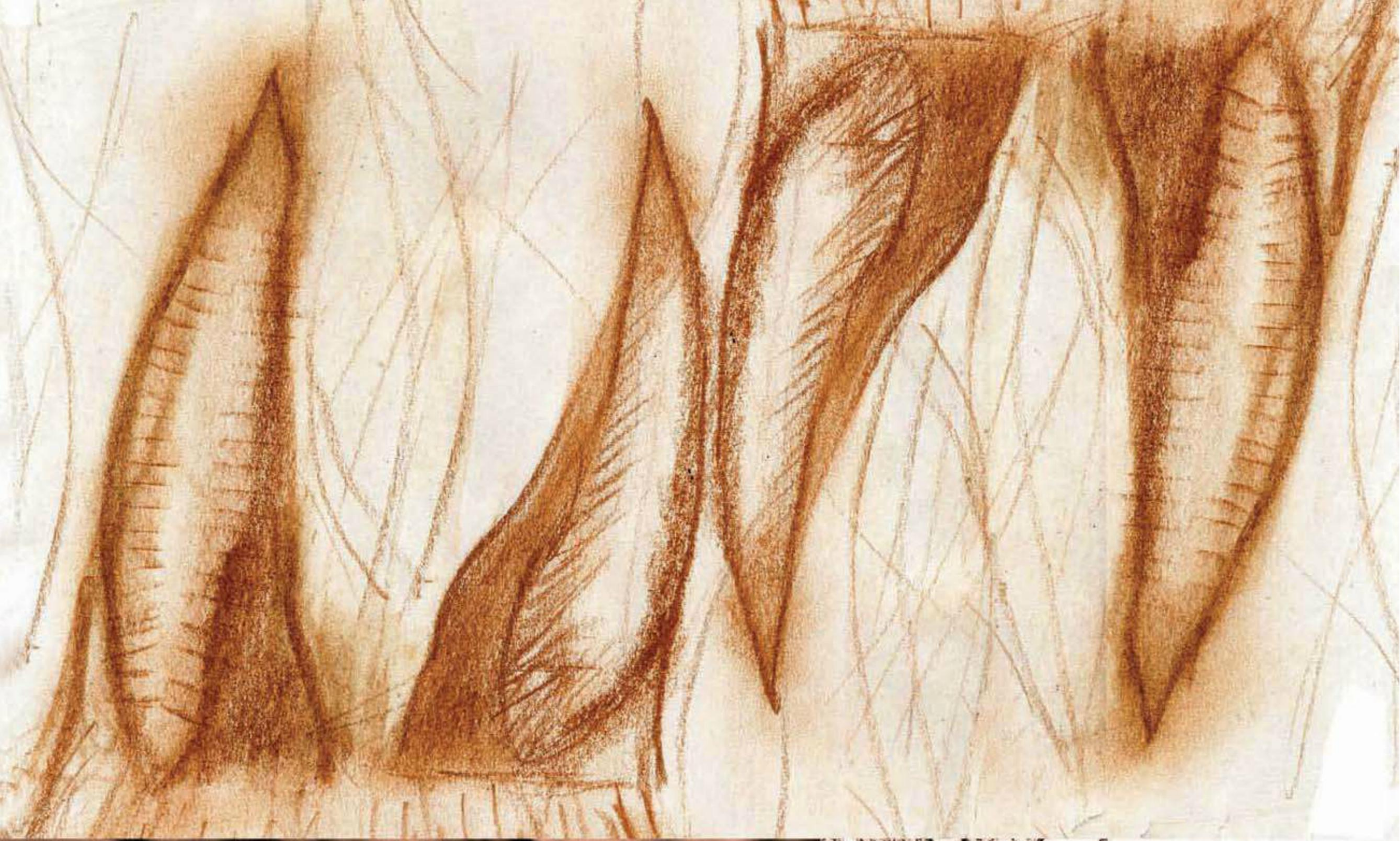
STAGE 1:

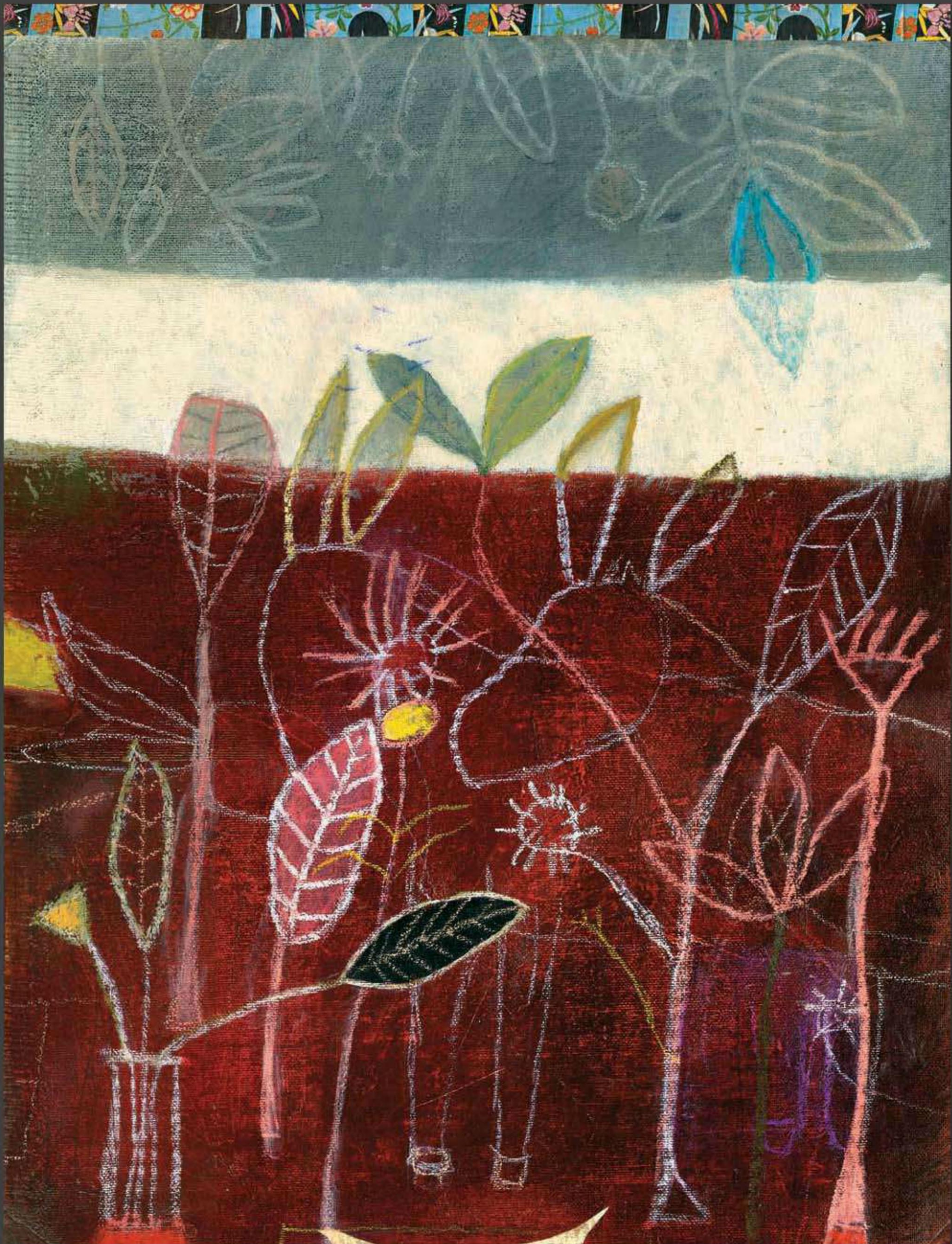
Initial crude line images of various weed forms in the garden, on scrap paper with ink

STAGE 2: (Opposite)

As I continued, I noticed the donkeys in the background. I can't help but see their ears as organic creatures, just like a plant or weed. I began to see their ears as negative and positive shapes.

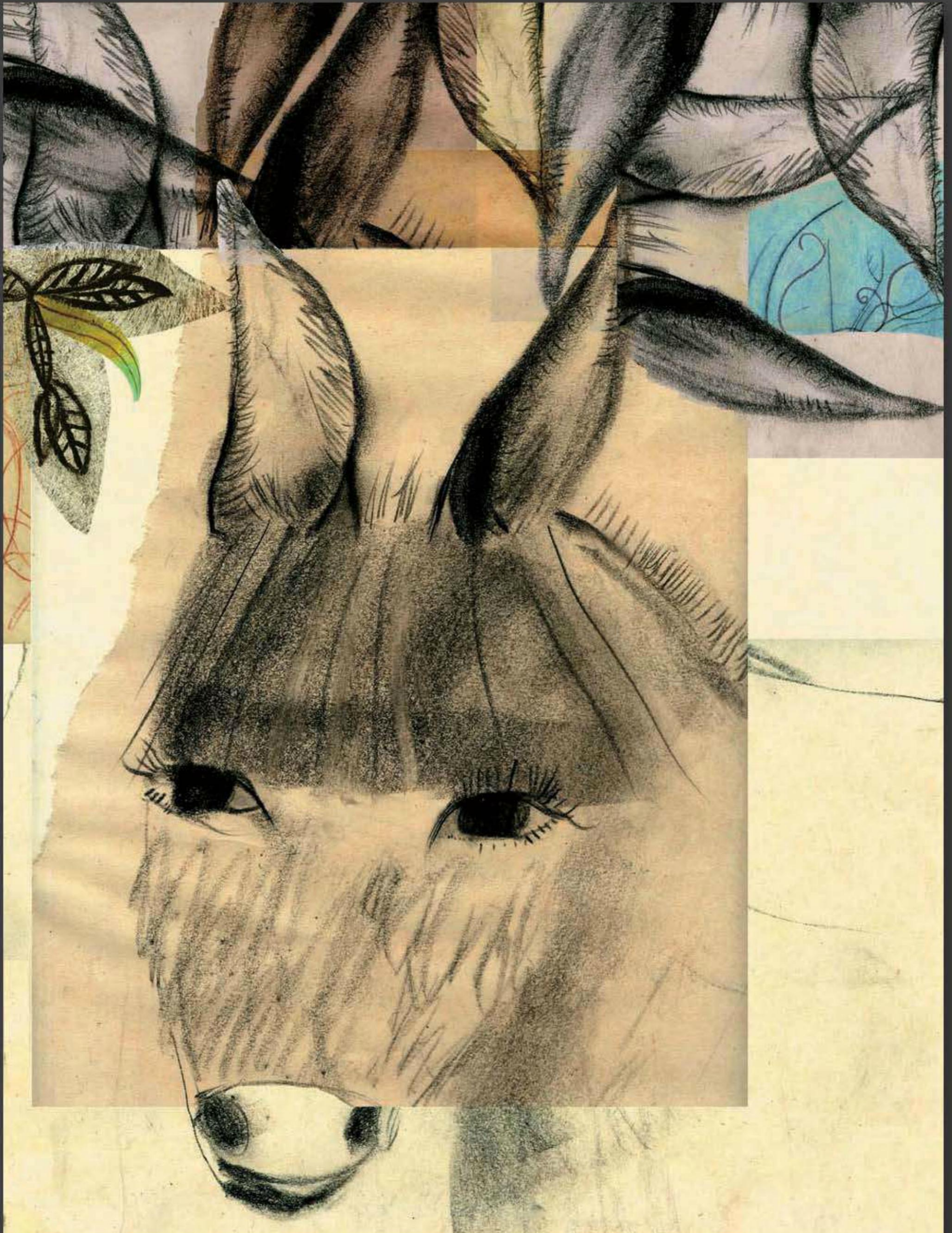
Turn the page to see how these initial sketch inspirations turned out. Do you see shapes around you that become spatial patterns rather than objects? Can you incorporate them into one of your pieces?





STAGE 3A:

Fully developed illustration.



STAGE 3B:

Fully developed illustration.

Words are powerful memory joggers. Jot down a word versus a sketch.

MAKE NOTE TAKING EASY

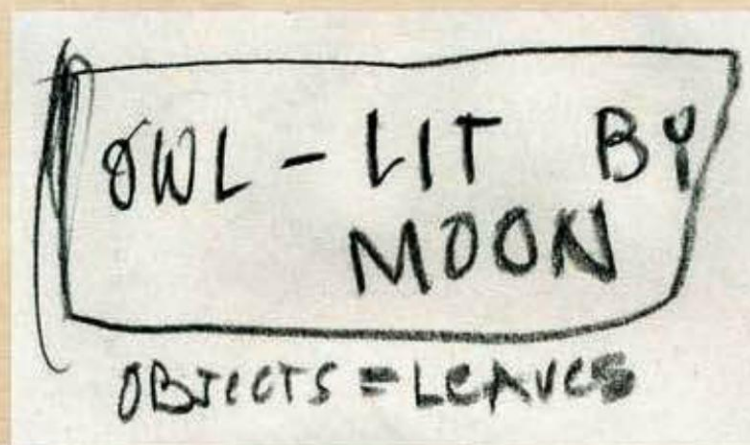
Just like you take a twenty-minute walk to keep your mind and heart alive, take twenty minutes to observe, sketch, or take notes. It will become part of your routine, and it will hone your senses the more you do it. Seeing, as well as drawing and painting, is a discipline.

Make it easy to capture your inspirations. A small digital camera is a real asset for any artist to document ideas anywhere and anytime. And of course, with many cell phones, a picture is at your fingertips.

I have a variety of note pads in all sizes around the studio and in my car. Some are tiny palm-size pads that fit in my pocket—perfect for when I'm walking or in the car on the go.

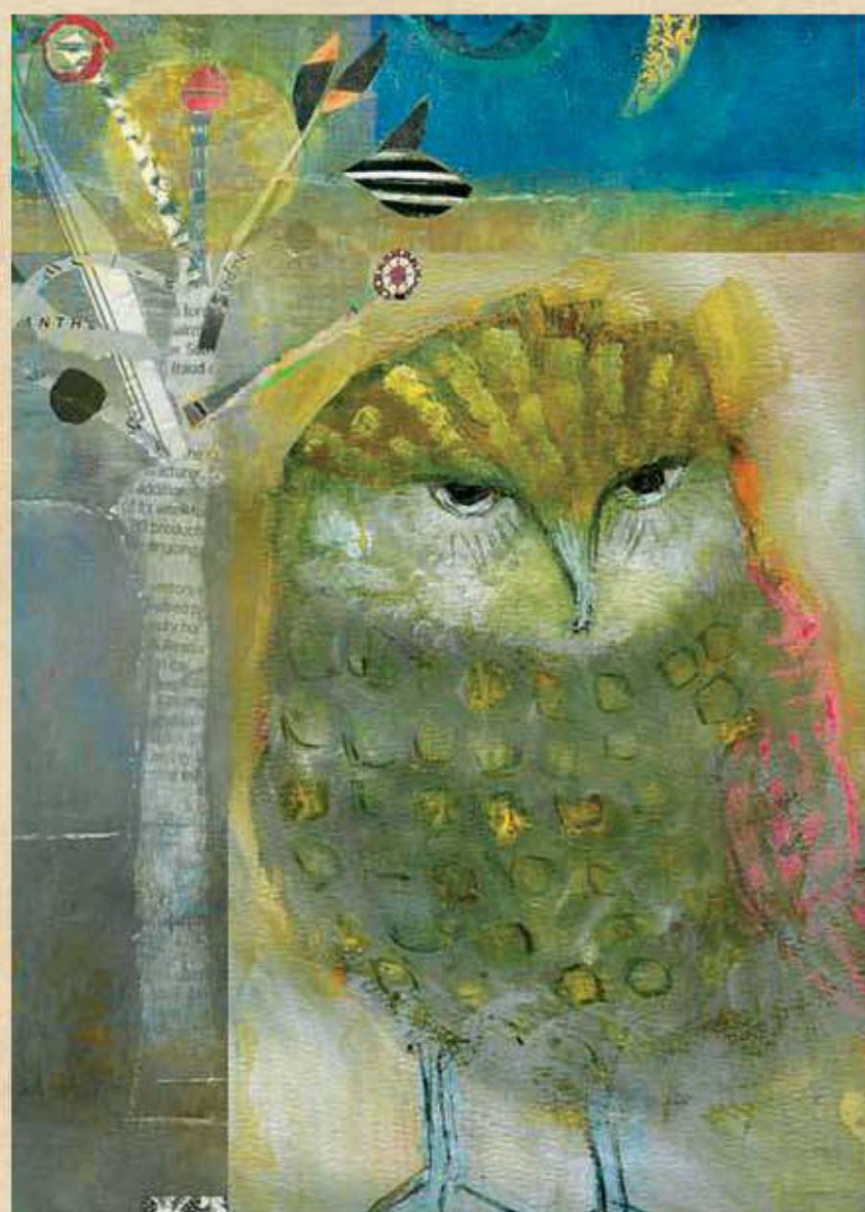
Scrap Box

Keep a scrap box full of thoughts that come to you throughout the day. Keep a pad of sticky notes at your desk and in your car for spontaneous encounters. Attach a pencil to a series of notepads so you're never without a way to take notes. I am notorious for writing words on my wrist for later reference!



STAGE 1:

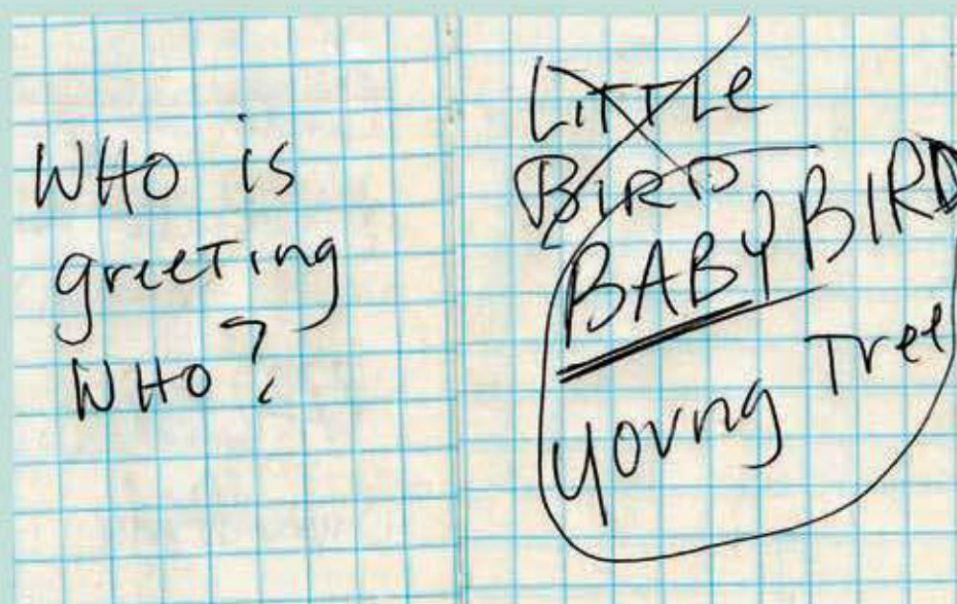
A moonlit owl in the upper hayloft inspires me to jot a note down in the studio.



STAGE 2:

Soon after, I created this piece but placed the owl next to a tree instead of the barn loft. The leaves must have been very inspiring to me that night.

Name one thing today that sticks in your head.
Was it inspiring enough to sketch or draw?



STAGE 1: (Left)

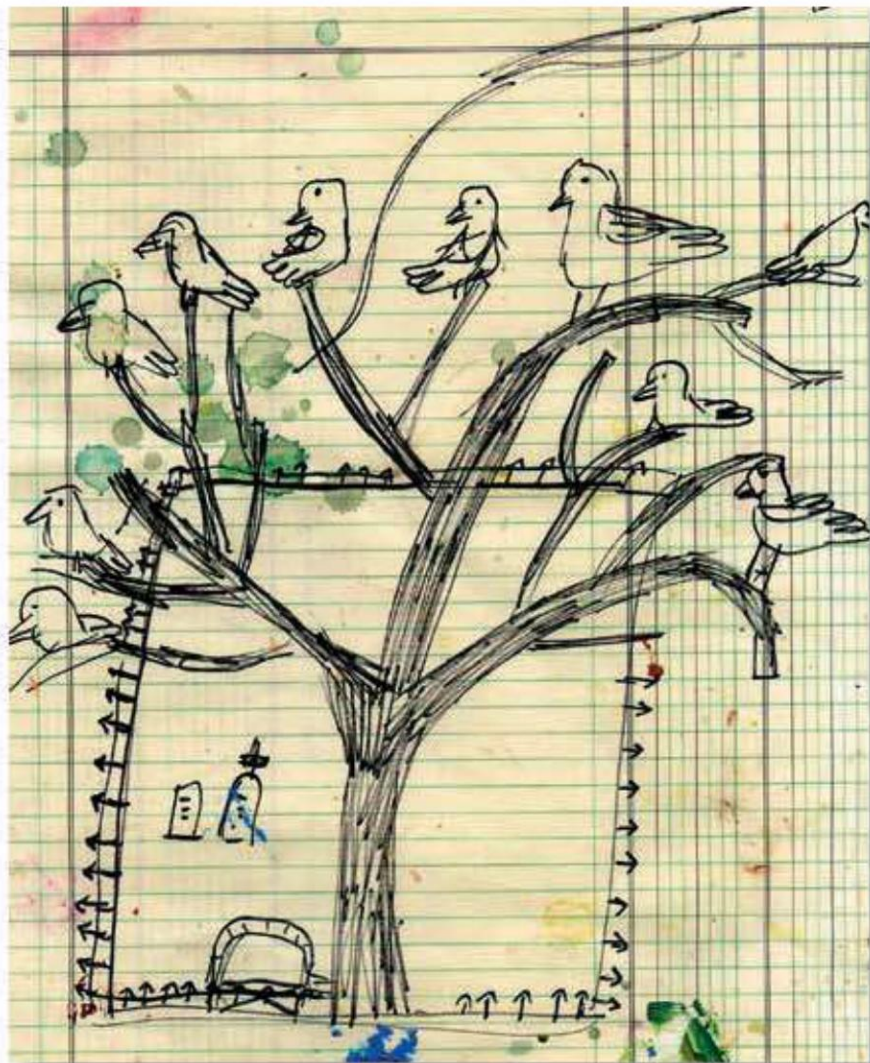
This is from one of the mini notepads in my car. On this day I was touched by the youth of a bird and also by the tiny young tree it sat next to. They both seemed so vulnerable but hopeful.

STAGE 2: (Bottom)

The note taking above led to a series of pieces, including this one. I never did any more sketches on this—just went right to the final. It was all in my head ... and heart. Sometimes an inspired moment is ongoing and leads to a series of images. Sometimes it flutters and goes away but comes back days or months later. I think the important thing is to recognize it as a moment of inspiration and do your best, at that time, to honor it somehow and share it in art.



IDEAS FROM OUT THERE AND IN THERE



Just two of the many sketches from the artist's pile of inspirations that have never been made into final art ... yet.

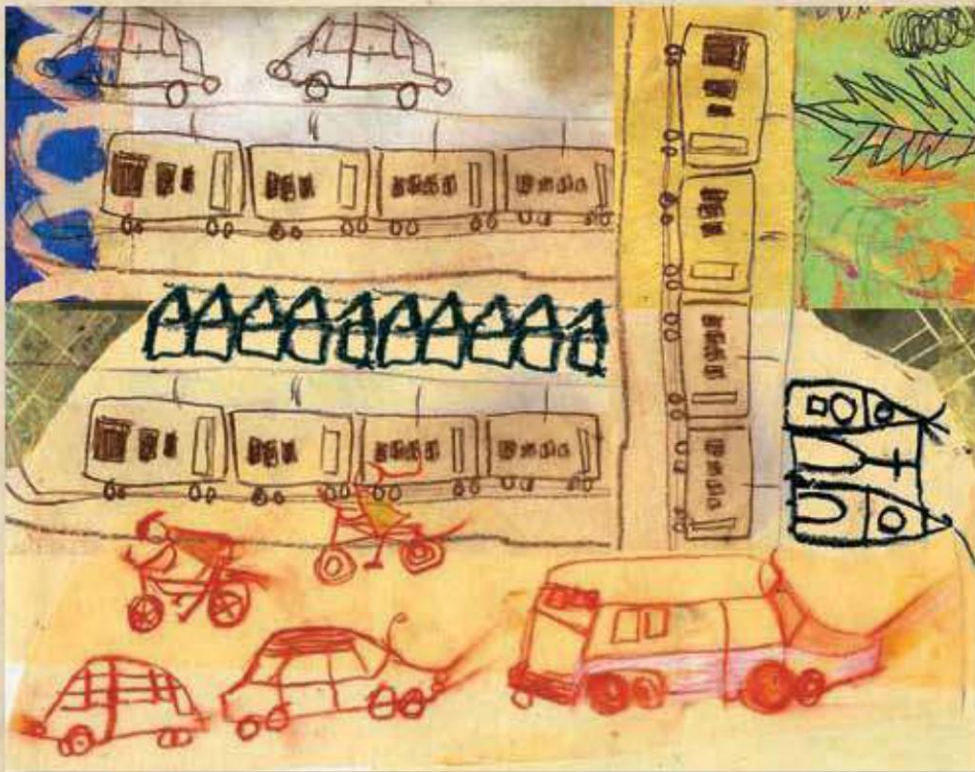
My life is on a farm, where I interact daily with nature and a cast of animal muses. Land, fog, and working in the fields are part of my inner and outer skin here. But I've also lived in large cities and studied and traveled abroad. Each environment brought a new palette of sounds, textures, and objects. How we each react to these environments and put them on paper becomes ours and ours alone. We will go into other inspirations in later chapters, but for now, I want to emphasize that cities, apartments, tiny houses, bookstores, gas stations, farms, rivers, mountains, high rises, and basements all have stories for us.

A jotted-down word or sketch can be like a conversation with another person. You can't necessarily know the outcome. You can guide it, but you often learn things you weren't planning on. Sometimes an idea pops into your head from what seems like nowhere, and when you revisit that idea at your desk, it takes a path you hadn't really planned. This is the magic! Let it flow and see what develops. You do, after all, have your own inner mysteries and thoughts that are going to interact with that initial idea. That's your voice.

Some people are more comfortable just sitting down and starting with an inspiring idea that came to them "out of the blue." I have learned not to think too hard about where some ideas come from but to recognize them as wonderful little internal stories that I needed to tell—for myself as well as a viewer.

While we've been focusing on finding inspiration by going out and observing and sketching or documenting, many of your inspired moments just get soaked up into your own essence, and later—days, weeks, or months—an idea that has been unconsciously percolating in you spouts. This is the beauty and the mystery of creating.

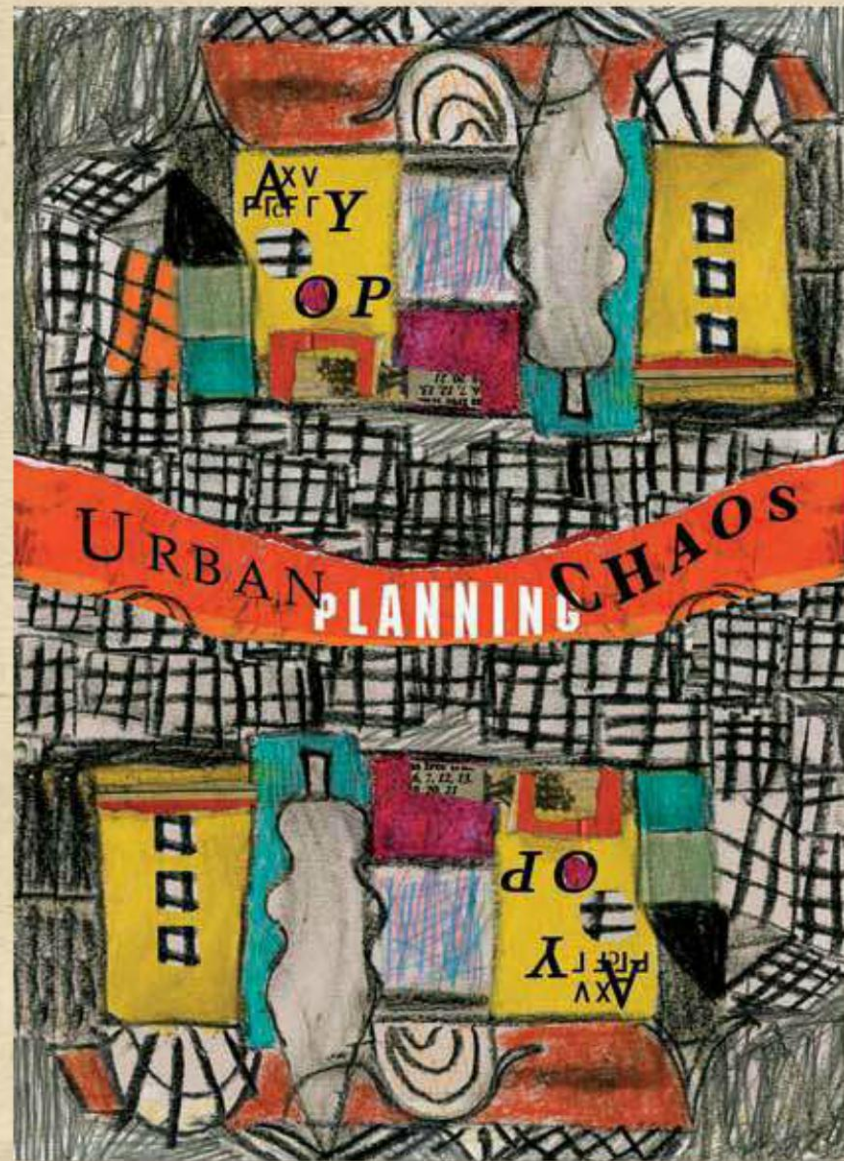
I've had ideas in piles that years later moved me to do a drawing.



Inspired by a Swedish friend and memories of my travels there over twenty years ago, this illustration is about Saint Lucia Festival of Lights. The white snow circles were made by layer upon layer of collaged white tissue paper.



After a trip to the city, I made this crude sketch, trying to capture the chaos and activity I felt on that particular day. Note the two birds in the lower right; always, my homage to nature ends up somewhere, somehow. Do you live in the city? Maybe a trip to the country would inspire drawings outside of your comfort zone.



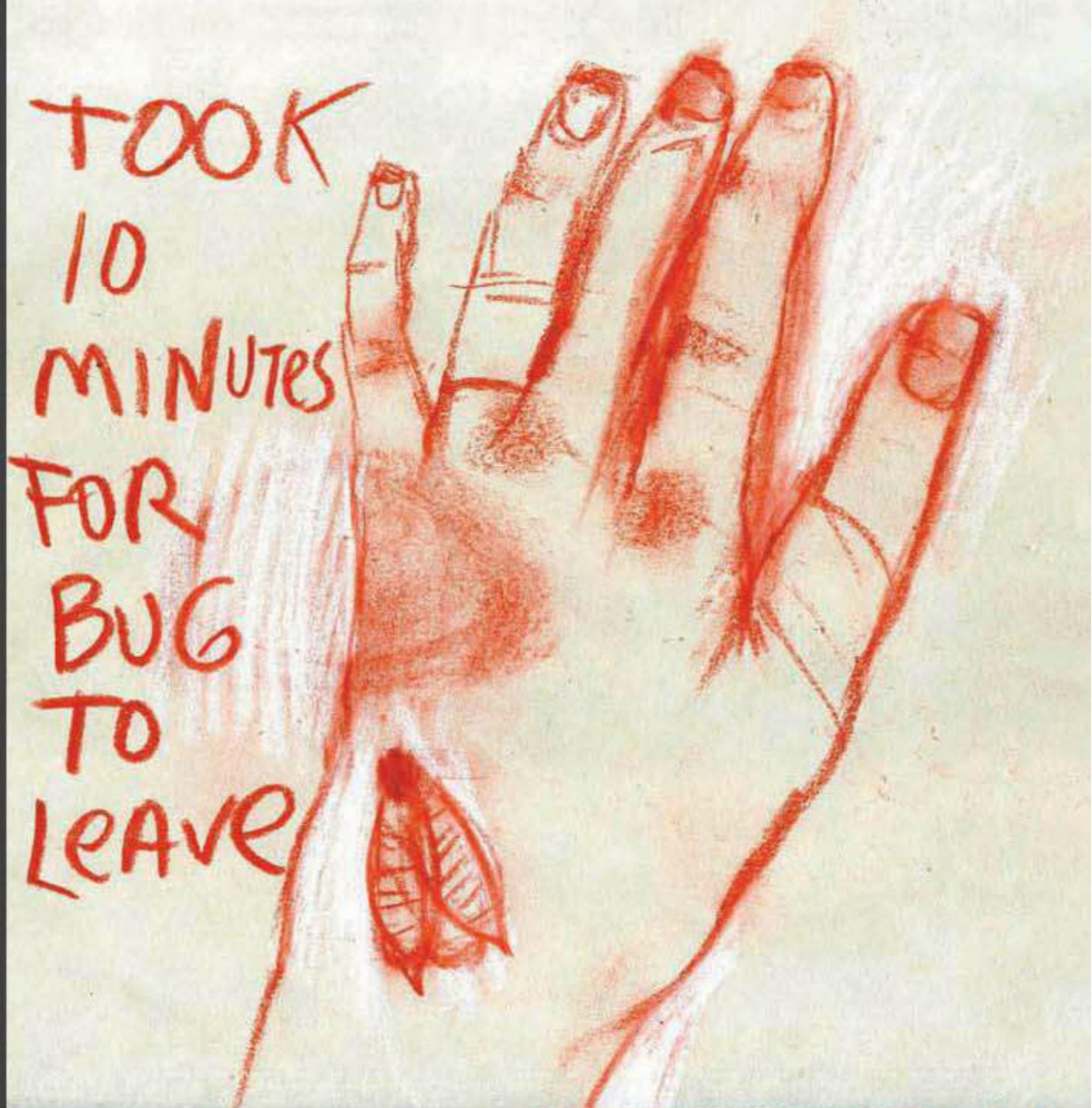
A piece inspired by urban growth boundaries.

Mining for Ideas

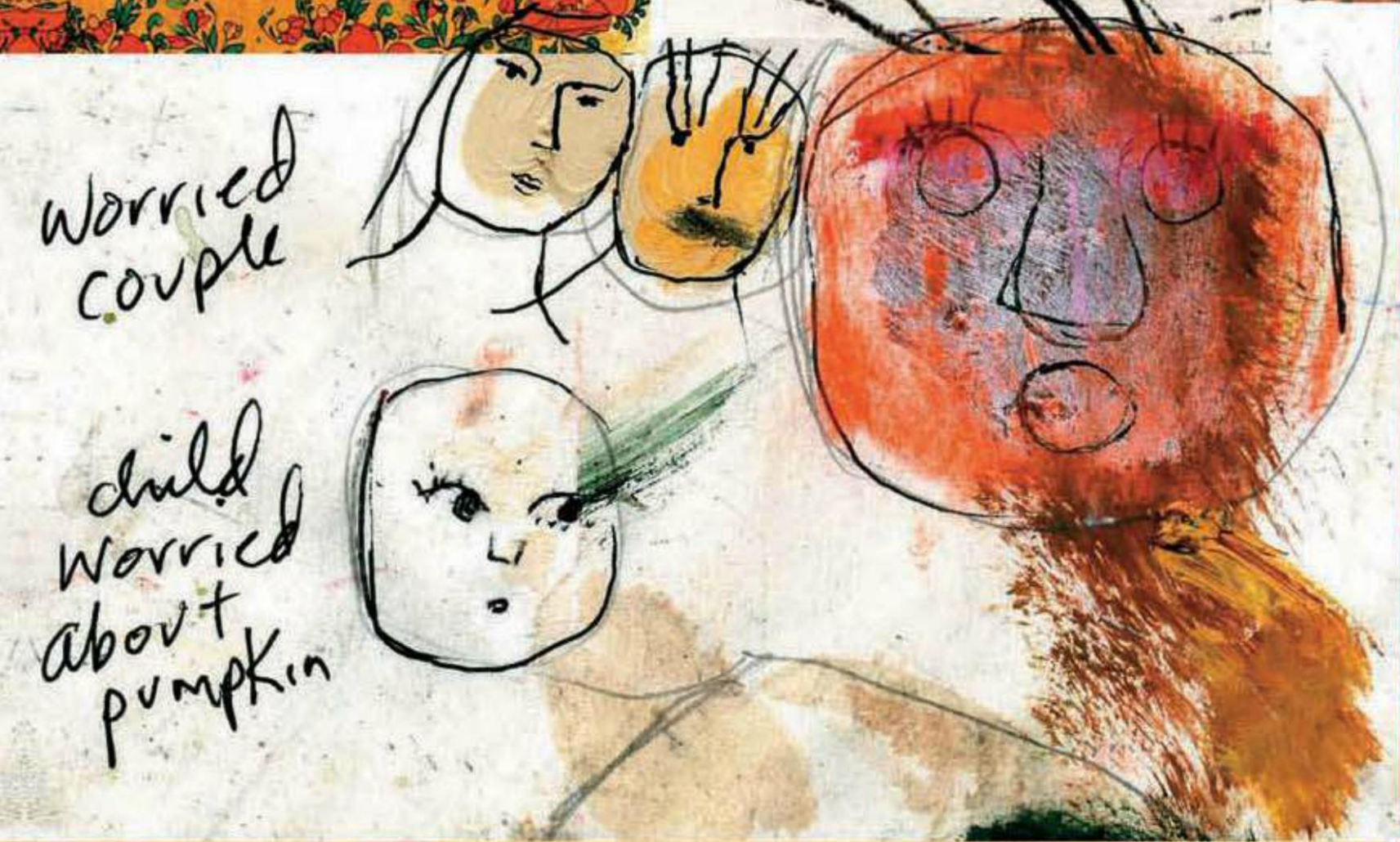
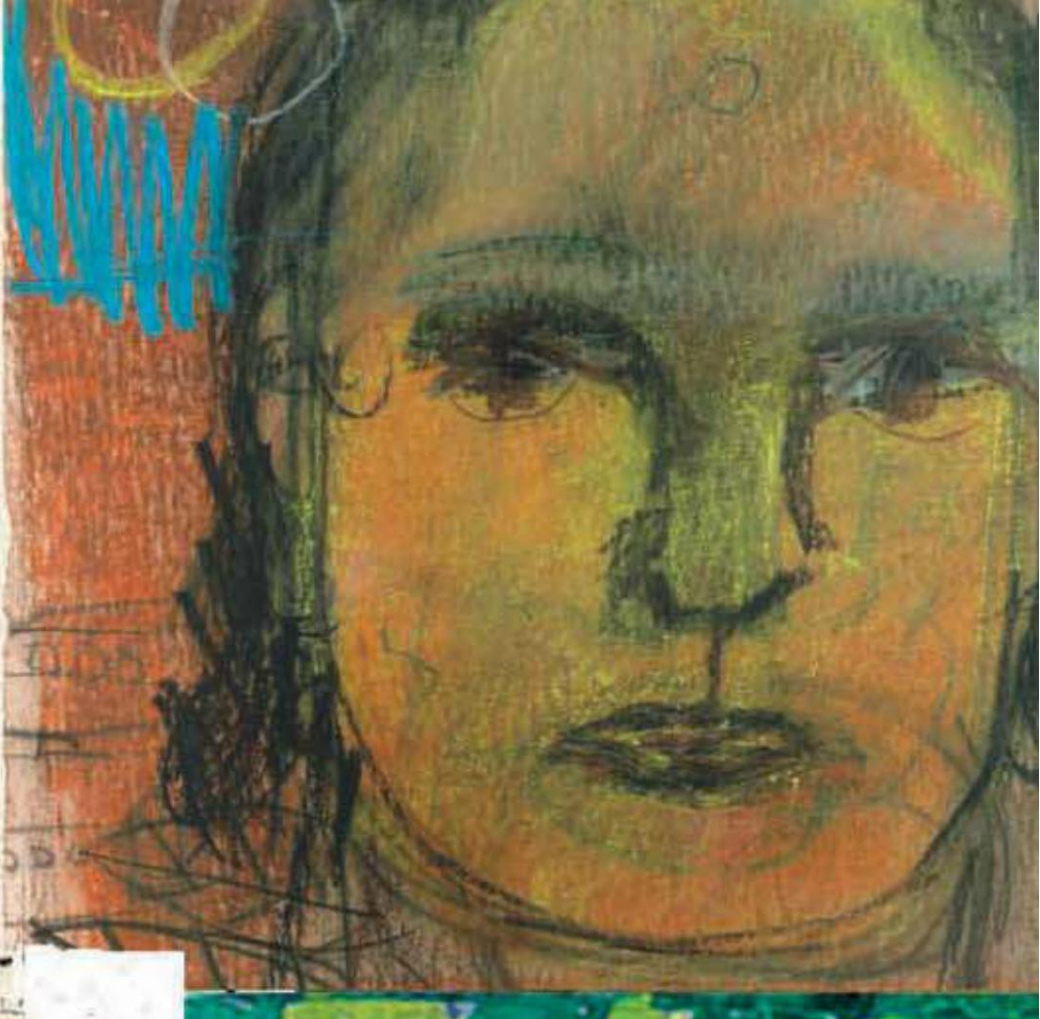
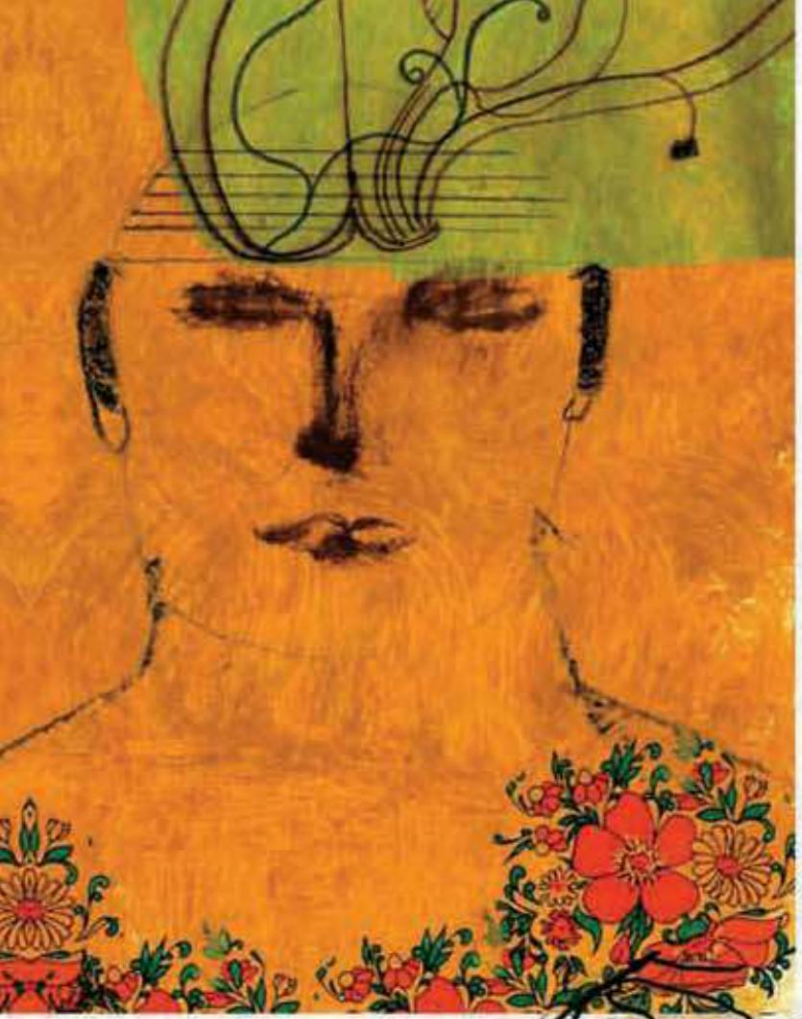
Retrace your day in your head. What things happened that left a visual impact on you? Jot those ideas down. Add them to your idea box or notebook for later reference. Here a collage of images on the facing page shows how simple daily activities are ripe with emotion and initial sketch ideas.

- Sit and watch faces on the morning commute. What emotions or stories do you see?
- A face at the coffee shop intrigues you—why? Was it color, texture, expression, or memory?
- A pair of red high heels in a store window takes you way back to a childhood memory.
- What shapes and textures do you respond to?
- You hear a story on the radio or read an article that inspires you.
- People are talking on the elevator, and you're listening in.
- You're on a plane, and it makes you wonder what a bird sees in flight.

Not all inspired moments become full-blown drawings or illustrations. I think you sometimes have to let inspired moments gestate and evolve on their own time. On the other hand, you should look at drawing and art as a discipline and practice sketching, painting, and creating. Then if the idea needs to percolate and be reborn days or months later, it will. But first you should exercise that idea by drawing it out, playing with it, and exploring it.

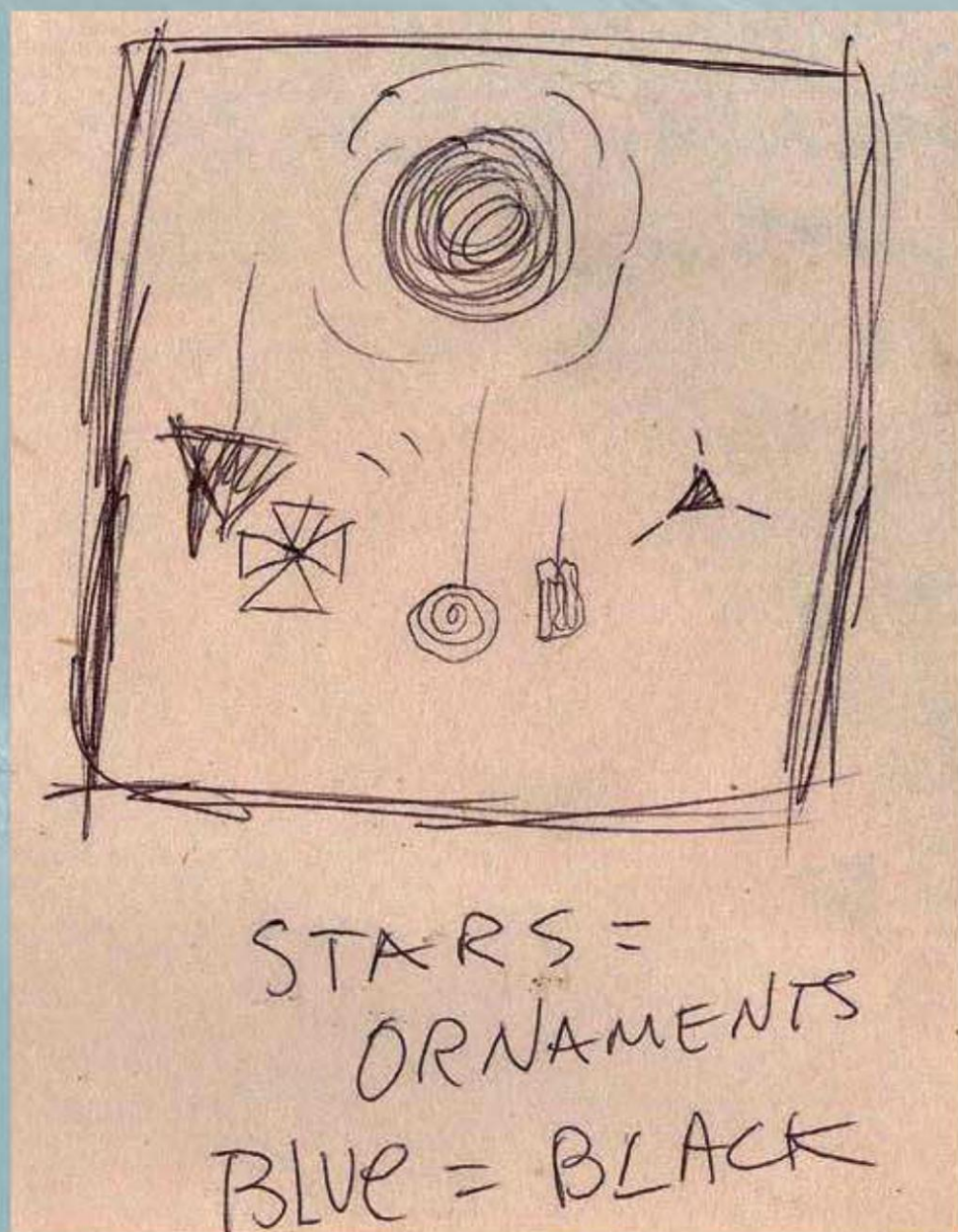


The artist sits at her farm observing the natural world. While one person's daily stories might be in nature, another's might be in the city.



LET THE IDEA BLOSSOM

Let's take a sketch idea and see how it progresses from start to finish. I'll start with some basic notes and sketches and show how they evolve on paper and in my head and heart.

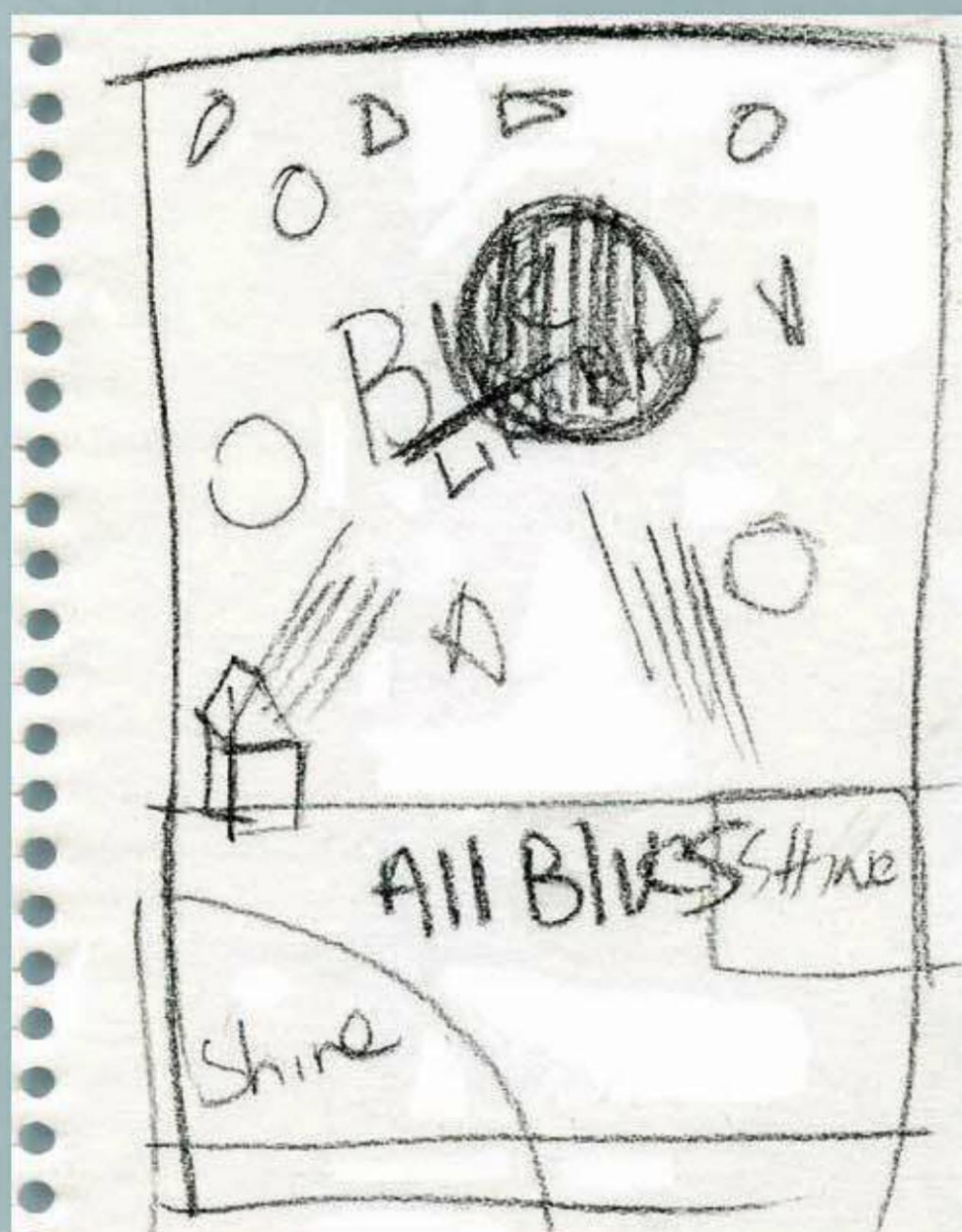


STAGE 1:

Initial inspiration written in a crude note in an artist's pad.

I like to call the initial phase of drawing the flow stage, as the idea starts like a little twig at the top of a stream and flows along collecting debris, dropping debris, and losing a bit of itself here and there until somewhere it comes to rest.

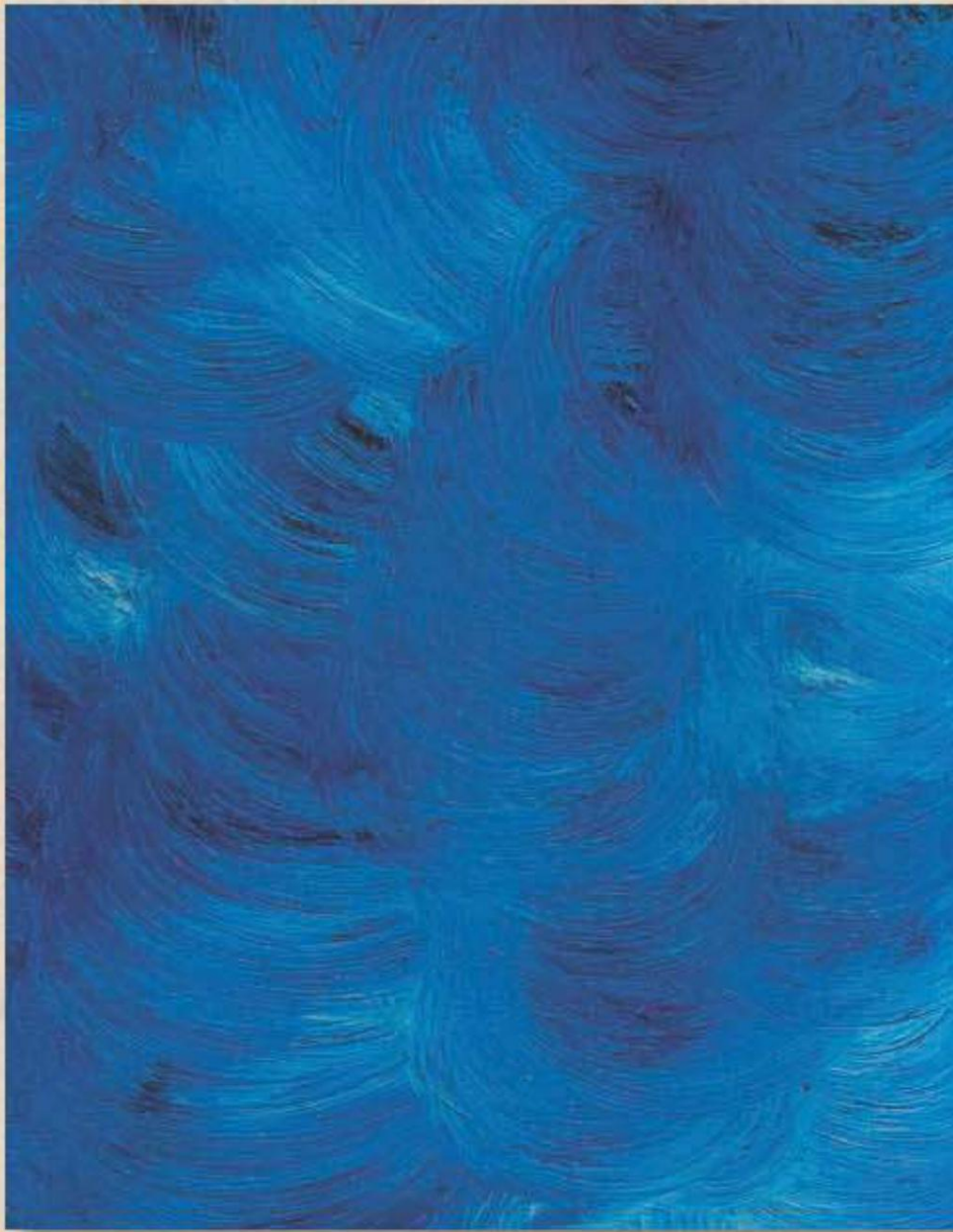
Living out in the country, I see a movie in the sky every night. Certain nights just grab me harder than others, and this was one of those winter nights when the sky was so black it was blue or vice versa. I remember making a note of it quickly after returning to the studio.



STAGE 2:

Months later, I revisited the idea, perhaps re-inspired by another starry nightscape.

This crudely written note sat for several months before I had time to revisit it. Perhaps another night had come along and reminded me, "The stars are like ornaments tonight," inspiring me to finally sit down and paint.

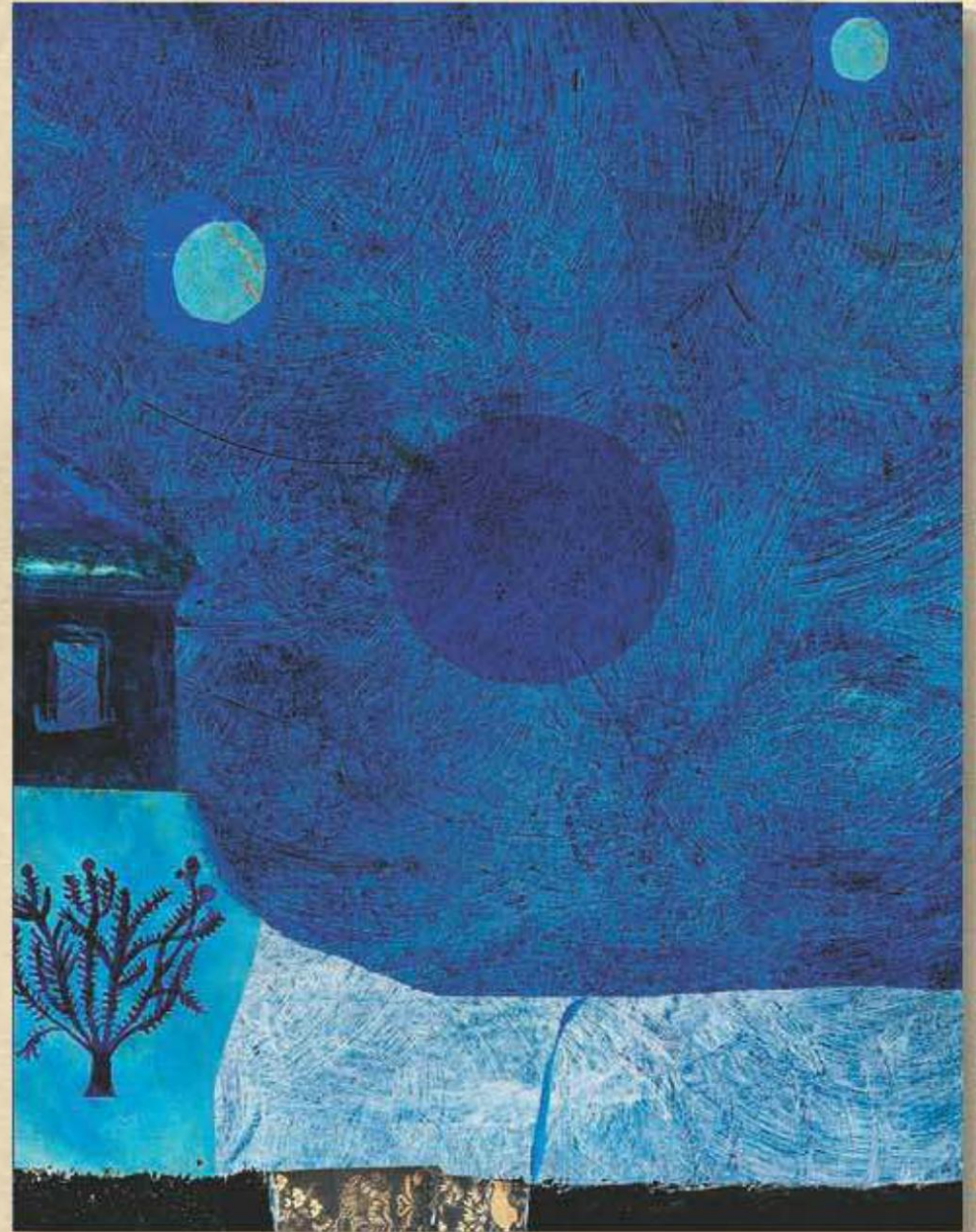


STAGE 3:

I began by covering the board in paint. I always cover my surface with a color. Not only does it give me a starting point, but the motion of adding a wash of color is like a “warm-up.”

This initial layer is not only a ground, but it frees me from thinking of the painting as too precious. Once I get the initial color down, I don’t feel like I’m going to ruin anything. This is strictly psychological for me; you might not need to do that.

TIP The computer can be a like a vacuum cleaner sucking your creative juices clean. Trust me, I know! Turn off any sound alerts for incoming email and create a noncomputer area just for art and writing. I find staying away from the computer is like any discipline: I need to make a conscious decision to do it, and then I need to practice it daily, just like getting exercise.



STAGE 4:

Figuring out the initial composition | The idea is at a fluid stage at this point, and I don’t have a strict sketch that I stick to. I’m thinking of that huge moon and the blue. I play with shapes by cutting them out of scrap to see how shapes might work, or I use pastel to draw figures before applying them in paint.

I wanted to capture the bigness of the sky and how it felt almost like shiny blue. Objects were lit by the stars and moon. Note the black stripe at the bottom, another recurring symbol in my work. I feel it grounds me and the painting, like roots of a tree or like the frame around a work of art. I’ve added a few stars and a giant moon to show you how the painting was progressing early on.





STAGE 5:

I often incorporate collage bits into my pieces. I keep cutouts of colors from magazines, bits of fabric scraps, stamps, or whatever inspires me. I keep a box on my painting table and play with the shapes and colors as I work out the image.

This stage is where you need to plow ahead and really focus without interruption on your task. Even if you feel stuck, just keep moving forward and thinking. The creative process can be mysterious, but if your hands are moving, sooner or later things develop. Another tip is to use tracing paper and play with the composition at this stage. Get up and move away from the piece if you're having trouble.

Speaking from experience, there are many times when I feel an idea is going nowhere, but after a while, something pops and reminds me of something or looks like something, helping me add new details to the picture that is forming. If after a couple of hours nothing is flowing, and I mean *nothing*, I walk away from it, take a walk, or work on something else and come back to it later that day. Or I go pet the donkeys, and that always helps!

As I continued thinking about and playing with this piece, I realized I wanted the stars to be abstract and magical. I began to add collage bits.

Fresh Perspective

If you get to a certain stage in the composition and you just can't pinpoint what is wrong with the actual composition, try turning it upside down. Sometimes this helps you see shapes and spaces. Another trick is to place the piece in various locations in the house and walk away from it; work on something else for an hour. Return to it and often you see the next steps you want to take.





STAGE 6:

The final piece | I added more foreground and changed the composition slightly from the initial layout. And I added a donkey. Or is it a toy donkey? The red circles under the donkey are a mystery to me, but I chose to leave them in. And I wonder, what is the donkey seeing in that window? That's a different story for some other time.



This piece was inspired by the struggle of a Muslim woman who felt trapped between cultures, yearning to combine elements of each and be free. It was created with digital layers of scanned images, a technique that will be discussed in chapter 5.

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

So there are stories all around me, and you. Your stories will be uniquely yours and may be inspired by city sounds or nighttime outings in noisy gathering spots. Maybe a dream inspires an idea. Watching a movie, listening to music, reading—ideas can blossom from all of these experiences. Wherever you live, work, or dream, you need only look, listen, and feel to have a whole library of stories to tell.

Let me show you just a small sampling of pieces in my illustration portfolio and what inspired each.

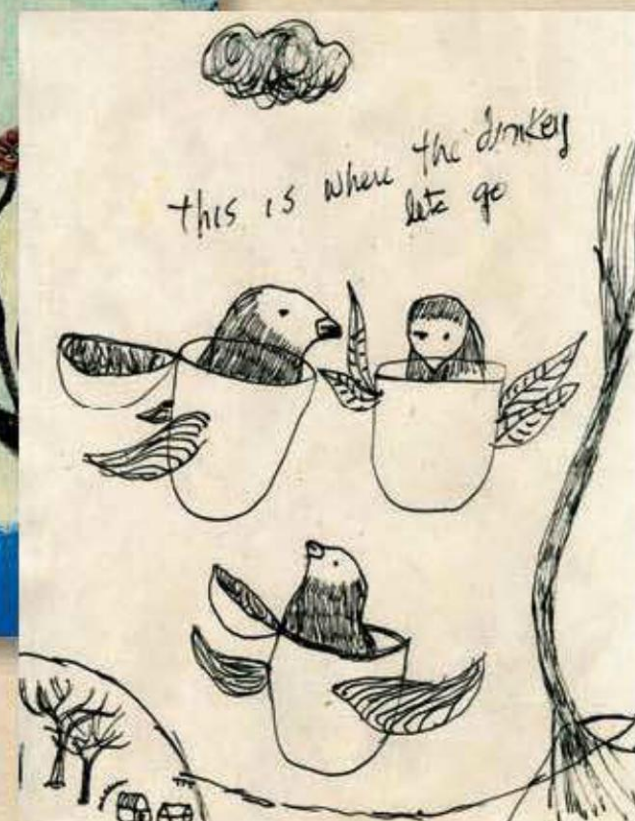
"There is life in everything. Why didn't I paint it long ago?"
—Ludwig Bemelmans



FUN EXERCISE

Try writing a short story of fifty words. Then divide it into illustrations but leave the words out. Did your pictures tell the story? Or pick one sentence out of a book and illustrate it. Look for ways to show what you feel and show what you see in your mind as you read that sentence. A bird sings from the rooftop ... but what does the bird see? Where is the house—in a park or a city?

What experience did you witness that upset you?
Can you create a fanciful illustration where everything
turned out okay in the end?



I found a beautiful blue egg on the road and brought it to my garden, where I set it in a planter to enjoy its beauty and give it a respectful place to rest safely. Weeks later, a visitor to our farm saw it, picked it up, and broke it. I created a whole series of pieces about where baby birds go if they aren't born. I fantasized how their little eggs became living rooms that could fly them to safety and to visit other friends.

How would you illustrate the feeling of safety in a drawing or painting?



The intent here was to illustrate the feeling of mother as safe harbor. This piece was painted on a box, with the interior lined in vintage wallpaper. I placed locks of hair and some trinkets inside the box, each symbolizing mother love. The piece was part of a group show raising awareness for a charity that worked to combat abuse in families. The organic leaves symbolize growth and fertile grounds.



This piece was inspired by a newspaper article about a woman who found comfort adding life to earth by planting trees, after experiencing multiple losses of loved ones. It is an example of “layers” of drawings and collage pieces that are later scanned and “sandwiched together” to make one final digital original. Read more about this technique in chapter 5.

Let Go of the Outcome

To keep yourself from getting too “attached to the outcome,” try having several pieces going at the same time. This might not work for everyone, but it can help make you less afraid to add or subtract something in the piece for fear you might ruin it. Taping your work to Masonite boards is a benefit because you can move the boards around and bring a new piece onto your work area easily.

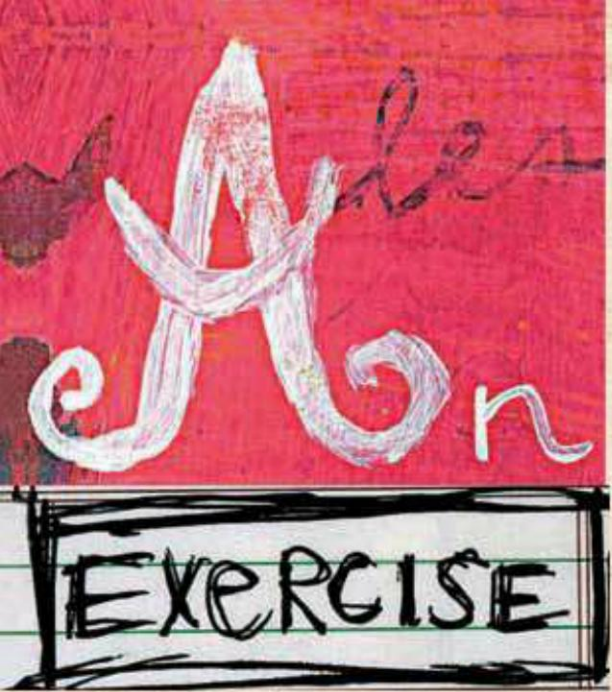
Different Perspectives

If you’re looking at one of your in-process works and you can’t quite figure out what is wrong with the composition of the piece, try turning it upside down or 90 degrees. This can allow you to see shapes at different angles and perspectives, helping you improve the overall balance and design of the image.



For practice, I set out to draw a night scene with a child. I love the night's darkness, as well as its mystery. The way the red shed is lit up is inspired by our own barn in moonlight. After I finished, I set the piece down for a few days. Later I gave the girl some mice to guide her in the dark.

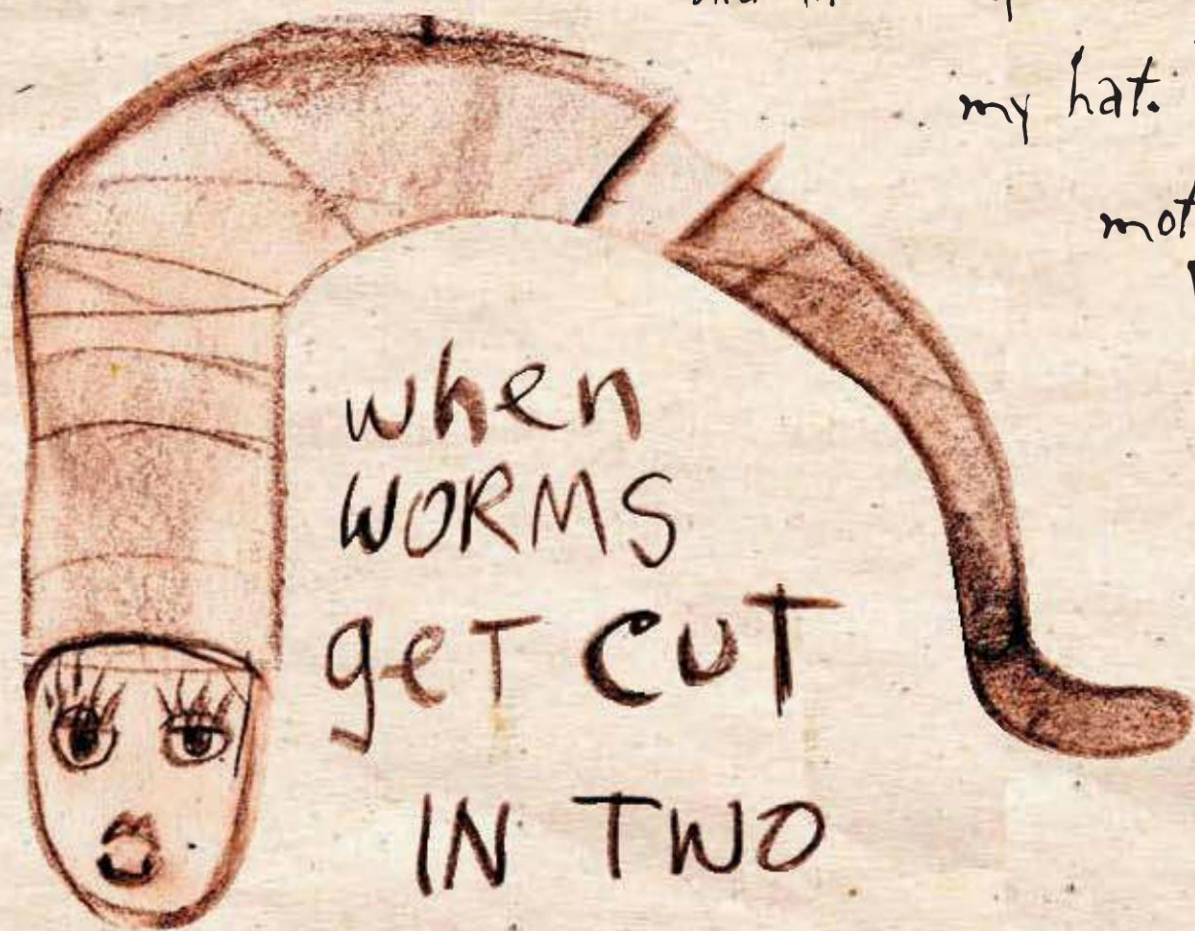
What person's story inspired you today?



Go now and look with the eyes of a child, but look like it's your last day. Tell that story in drawings.

March 25 ... Today I left my shoes in my bedroom and put on my favorite hat. I didn't need shoes because I wanted to feel my grass friends. I went outside and walked all over the grasses, but I tried to tiptoe so I wouldn't hurt them too much. They said, "Thank you for tiptoeing!" My toes felt free and happy in the grass. I saw so many things on the ground and in the air. Some were bright and shiny, some were soft. I saw a bird on a tree. The tree was little like me. I think the bird liked my hat because it sang a song to me and my hat. When I was in my bed, my mother was going to read to me.

But I had to tell her my story about walking in the grasses. And I wore my hat to bed too and sang the bird song.





I see
today

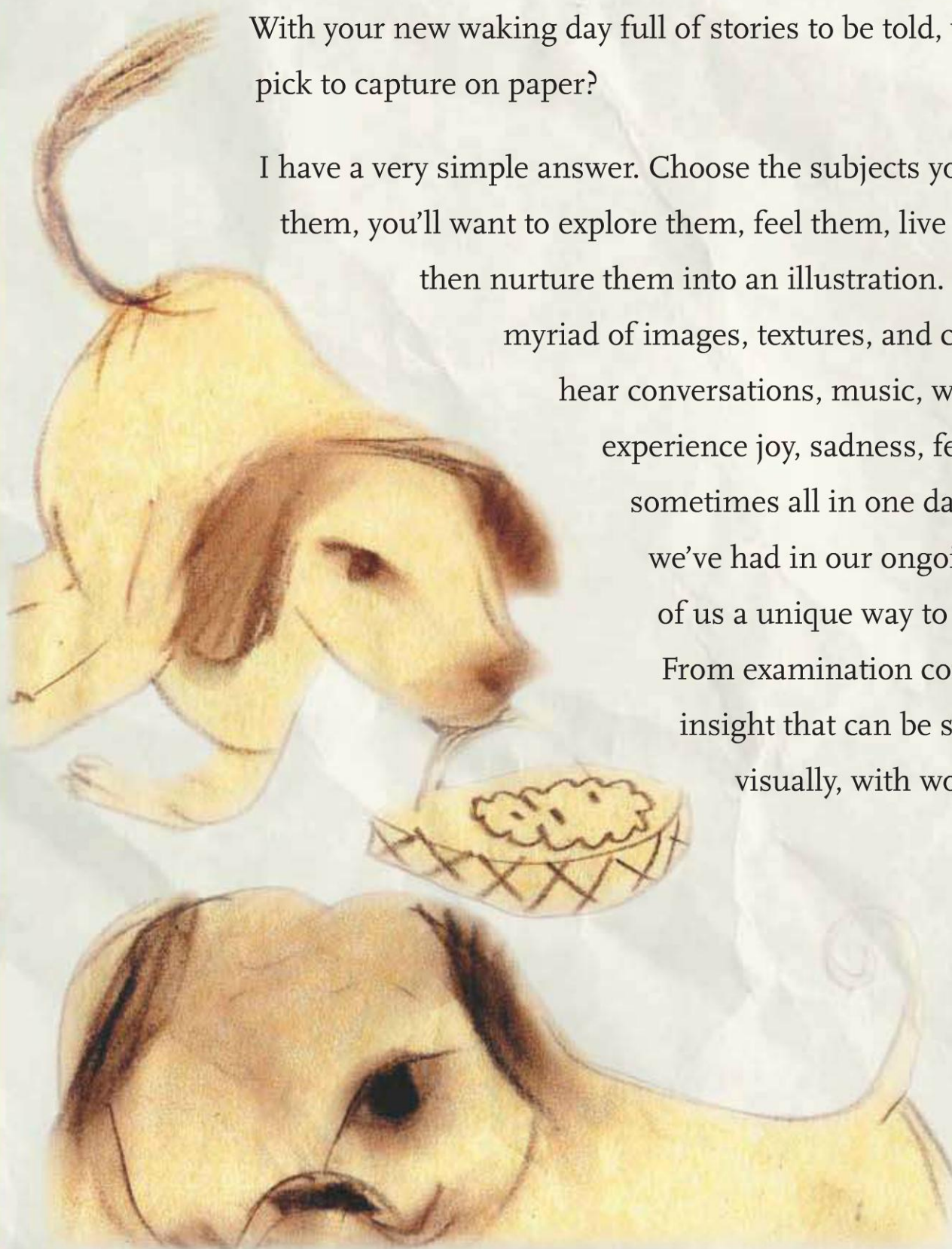
later³

Inspiration:

DRAW WHAT YOU LOVE

With your new waking day full of stories to be told, which ones do you pick to capture on paper?

I have a very simple answer. Choose the subjects you love. If you love them, you'll want to explore them, feel them, live within them, and then nurture them into an illustration. Our eyes see a myriad of images, textures, and colors each day. We hear conversations, music, wind, and rain and experience joy, sadness, fear, and pain—sometimes all in one day. The experiences we've had in our ongoing lives give each of us a unique way to examine the world. From examination comes learning and insight that can be shared in story: visually, with words, or both.





"When you start a painting, it is something outside you.
At the conclusion, you seem to move inside the painting."
—Fernando Botero

HONOR YOUR MUSES

Here on the farm, I'm surrounded by my favorite muses ... animals. Some are four legged, some have wings that glitter in moonlight, and some are old and barely walking. We all have muses, be they animals, children, funny friends, or famous musicians. But each muse can be a collaborator in your illustrations, giving you a voice you might not have tapped into on your own.

The muse-artist relationship is just that: a relationship providing an abundance of entertaining and inspirational moments. Look at your muse as a dance partner—the give and take from each partner makes the dance come alive. The energy, joy, or insight you receive from a muse sinks into your heart, and someday it comes out in an illustration that in turn goes out into the world and inspires or touches another person.



Stella and Iris provide a daily supply of humorous stories, often involving their uncanny ability to escape fenced pastures. Goats will stand on two feet to reach high branches, and I often look out to the pasture and see my illustrations coming to life!

(Opposite)

A beautiful stray cat wandered onto our farm. He was very theatrical, so I named him Phineas T. Barnum after the great circus man. His theatrics in the barnyard inspired a short story in which animals gathered to hear him recite poems.







A muse can act as the conscious voice for something your subconscious already knows. It often feels safer to express certain things through a muse in an illustration. My donkey Pino is a perfect example of this. His calm demeanor translates into poetic thoughts and inspiring anecdotes. When the world seems a little crazy, little Pino helps me put things in proper perspective.

A muse can help you feel braver or wiser. Schulz spoke through Snoopy; I often speak through Pino. And you can speak through your muse too.

Is your muse an animal? Close your eyes and envision having a conversation with that animal. What does its voice sound like?



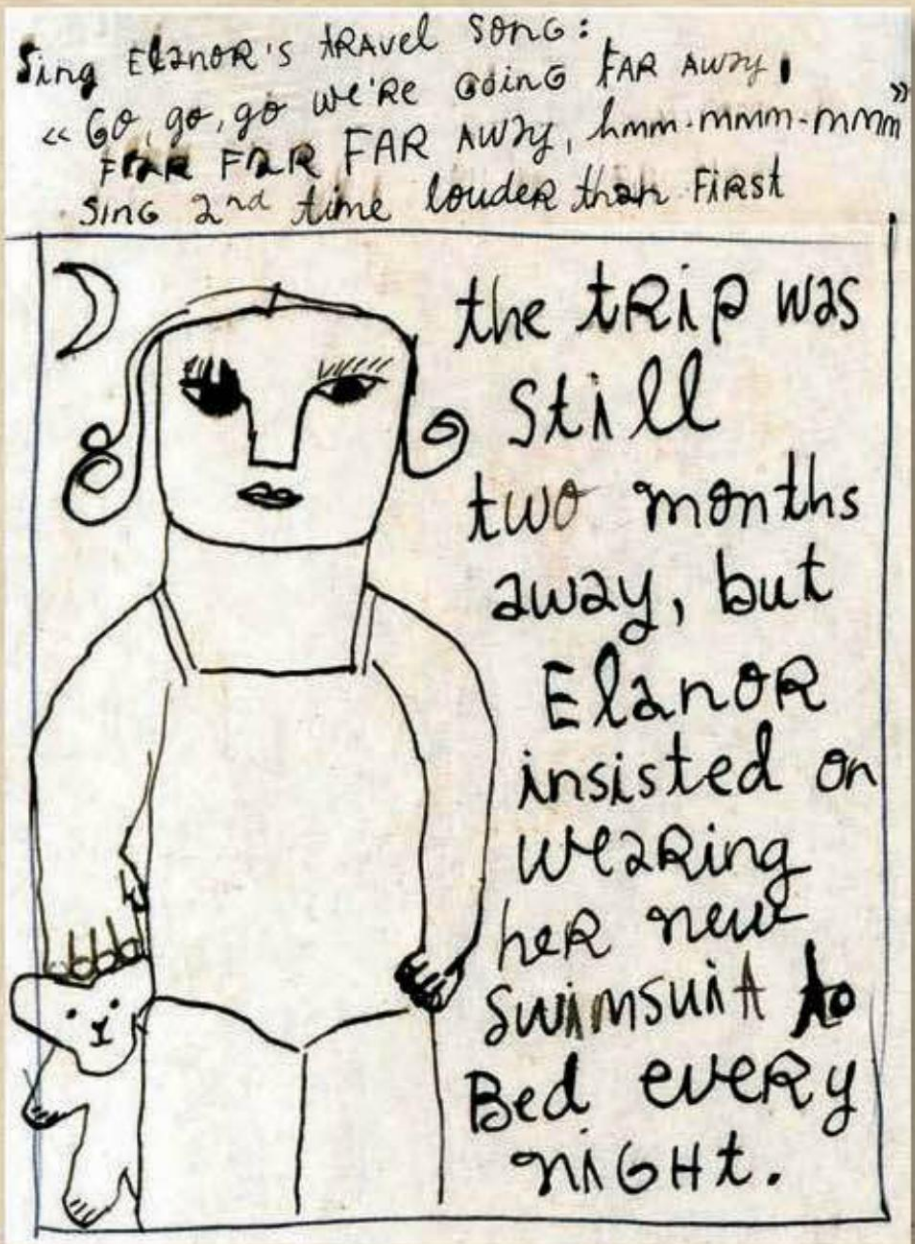
(Top and left)

Donkey Diary is an ongoing series starring Pino the donkey. Through him, I can address current issues as well as personal conflicts I might have—all with some humor and heart.

(Right)

Pastels and pencil on tissue paper | After a walk with Pino to visit an elderly neighbor, I drew this scene.





I once lived next door to a little five-year-old girl named Elanor. With her constant chattering and humming outside my window, she became an instant muse for me. My images of her were a combination of her antics and personality with my imagination.

Muses are just like the imaginary friends we had as children. We can share secrets with them or cling to them after a sad experience. Maybe your muse is “imaginary” in that it is a character you’ve invented in your head. I won’t tell anyone! The main point is to respect your muse by listening to it and conversing with it. Those dialogues will often generate inspirations for stories and illustrations.

Throughout life, your muses will change. The muses of your twenties might not satisfy you in your fifties. For just as you evolve, so do your muses. Rather than fight it, be open to new muses that appear in each new chapter of life. Muses have a way of presenting themselves when you need them the most—giving you hope in a hard time, making you laugh in a lonely time, or cheering you on in an exciting time.

“Let your muse find the child in your adult body.”

Who makes you chuckle or grabs your heart? Who irritates you, yet you are still drawn to them? Who inspires you through their actions? There’s your muse.





On the day Elanor learned to ride a two-wheel bike, I watched from my window. Soon she was a pro, and she was always so happy on that red bike. I gave her a pumpkin to carry in her basket.



At this stage I'm just feeling what the character looks like in my head. Consider a book you really love. Then keep it as an ongoing project on your desktop—one to pick up and work on when you feel stuck on something else.

INSPIRED BY FICTION

Books are a huge source of inspiration, loaded with characters, landscapes, drama, and plots—all just waiting to be illustrated.

One challenging but fun thing to do is pick one of your favorite stories and create a variety of images about it. If you love people, focus on doing portraits of the main characters. Maybe landscapes inspire you—so illustrate a scene in the story that incorporates some of your vision of the landscape.

Working in a series like this will challenge you to illustrate characters consistently through a series of settings. As you read, take note of the visual images, scenery, and fashion.

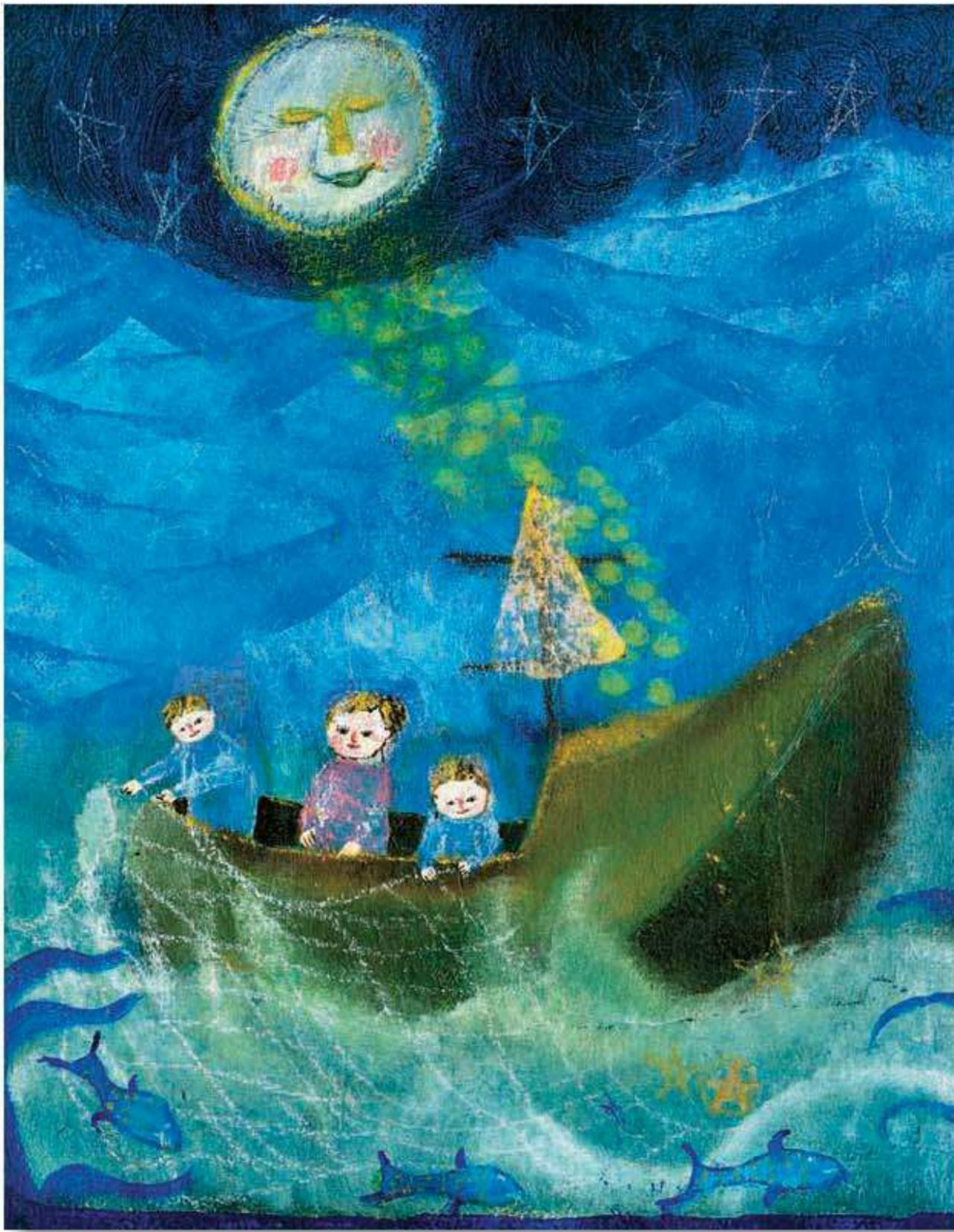
My favorite story of all time is *The Wizard of Oz*. Here are some rough sketches I did just to get a “feeling” of the characters—in other words, it’s back to capturing the essence again.



Since this book was also a movie, there are plenty of visual aids, but I want to make the characters in my own style. Here is a cropped image where the characters have a childlike style. Turn the page to see how I treated the entire scene of this illustration and how I envisioned the Lion.







(Opposite)

As a child, I remember being fascinated with images I saw in “There was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.” Upon rereading it, I realized the woman was taking a switch and sending the children off to bed. I wanted this illustration to reflect that and be more European in flavor.

I had lots of books as a child, and I love revisiting them as an adult. Look at old fairy tales or children’s poems and illustrate the ones you love, but illustrate them in your own voice and style. Poetry is another wonderful source of imagery. Since poems rely on very concise words to convey an idea, look at each word as a possible source of imagery.

Visit online reviews of books you remember enjoying. Then create an illustration. Or read a synopsis of a current bestseller and pretend you were hired to illustrate that synopsis.

“The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe,
And the wind that sped them all night long
Ruffled the waves of dew.”
—Wynken, Blynken, and Nod



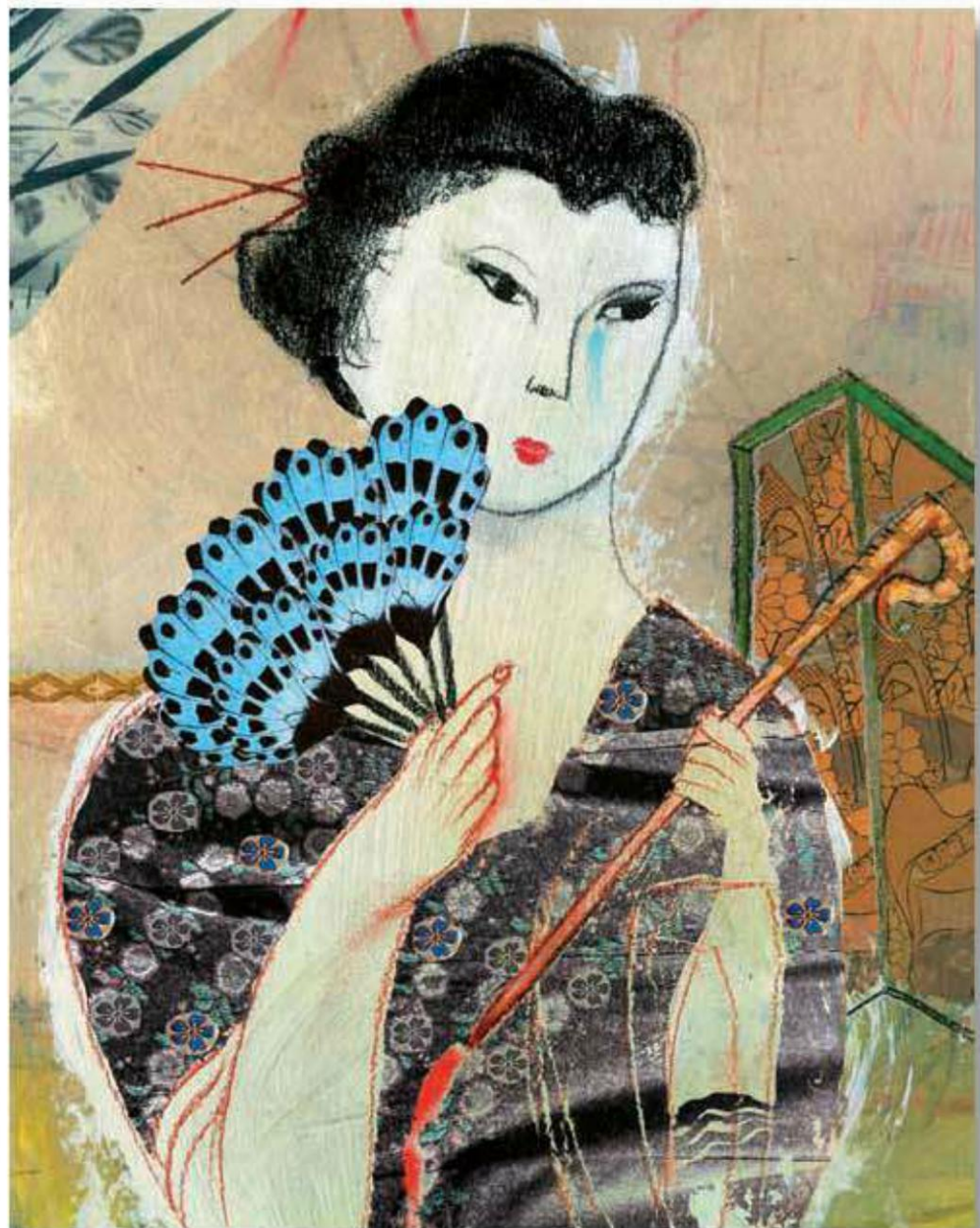
Challenge Yourself

If you always draw women, draw men and vice versa. Draw people of different ages and ethnic groups. Show different moods—happy, sad, and pensive.



The intensity of Picasso's face made to look like one of his Cubist paintings.

Biographies and interviews are good sources of inspiration. Life stories are rich with visual imagery, complete with drama, death, anger, love, and shame. After you find a person who inspires you, search for online pictures of them as a visual aid for an illustration. Choose symbols or objects to help illustrate the person's life story.



The fashions and patterns in this piece are appropriate to the Japanese setting for a piece on Madame Butterfly.

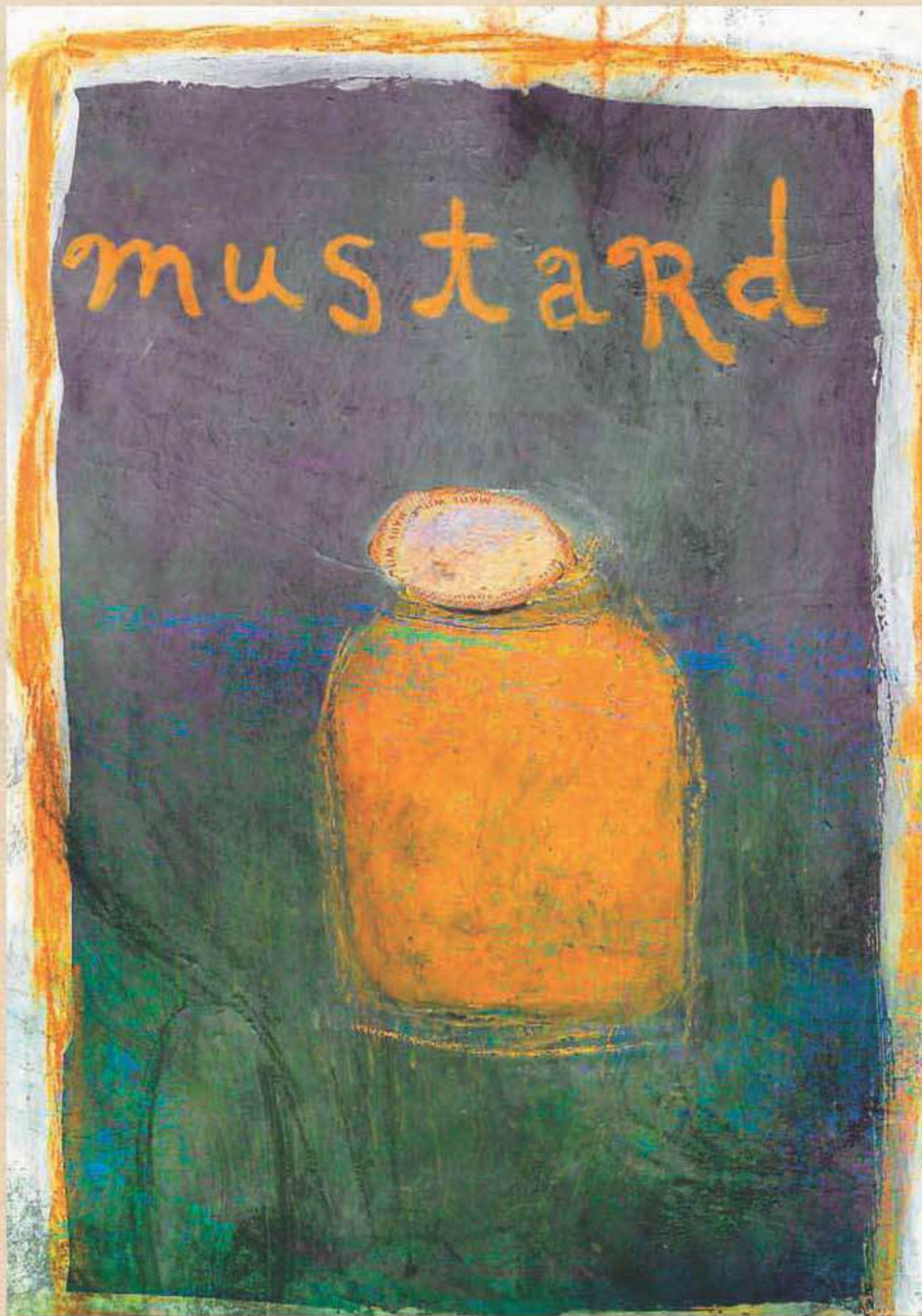
(Opposite)

Don't overlook the faces of the elderly. Look into those "lines of life" embedded in their skin. What story does each line hold? An article about a dying man in hospice who felt he was becoming the tree outside his window inspired this illustration.



INSPIRED BY SIMPLE THINGS

The inspiration for an illustration doesn't have to be a novel, a beautiful animal, or famous person. It might be as simple as ... a jar of mustard. One of my favorite colors is mustard yellow, and one day I just felt inclined to paint a simple ode to the little mustard jar in my fridge.



FUN EXERCISE

Look inside your fridge.

Is there a bottle or can label that inspires you?

Do certain vegetables have personal attributes?

Capture the colors, texture, or personality of these items in drawings.

Let the personalities of the items and food you've picked "play" and show you ideas. You will see the results of my experiment in the example on the facing page.





STEP 1:

I open my fridge to find fresh farm eggs and arranged some in a blue bowl I like.



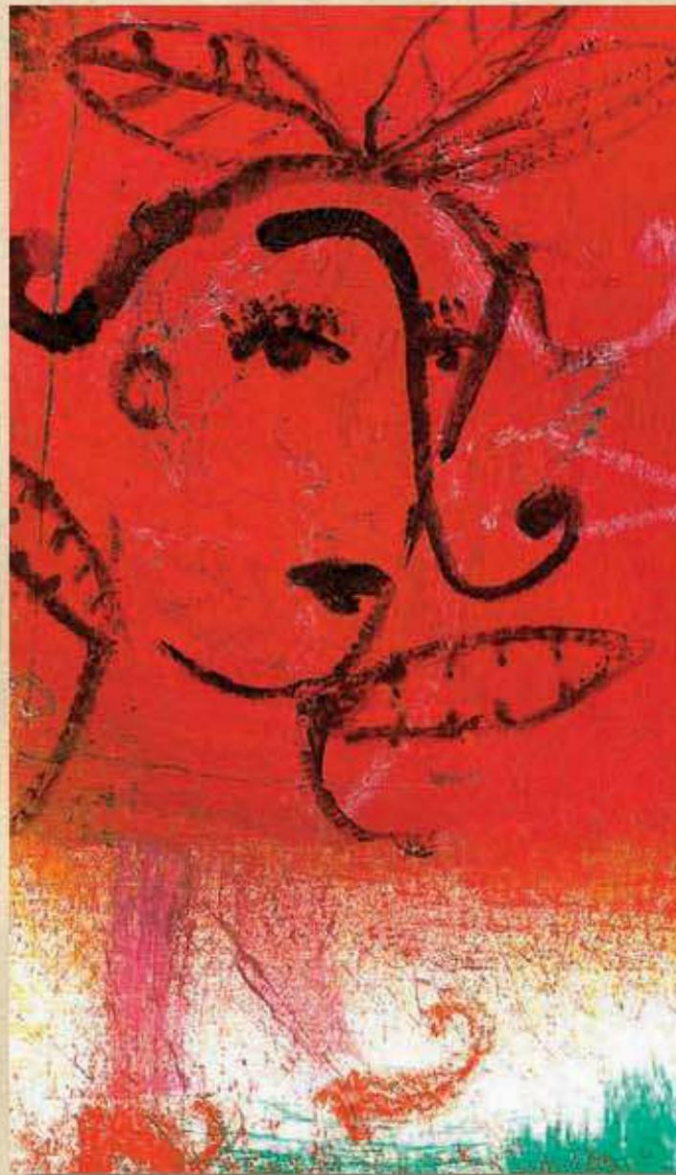
STEP 2:

The blue bowl makes me eager for our new hens to start laying—because they will lay blue eggs. I decide to draw some blue eggs in a gathering basket instead.



STEP 3:

My imagination takes over. Thinking of blue eggs reminds me of a blue ceramic hen my mother had that sat on the kitchen table, and the sketch turns into an ode to motherhood and a childhood memory of soft-boiled eggs.

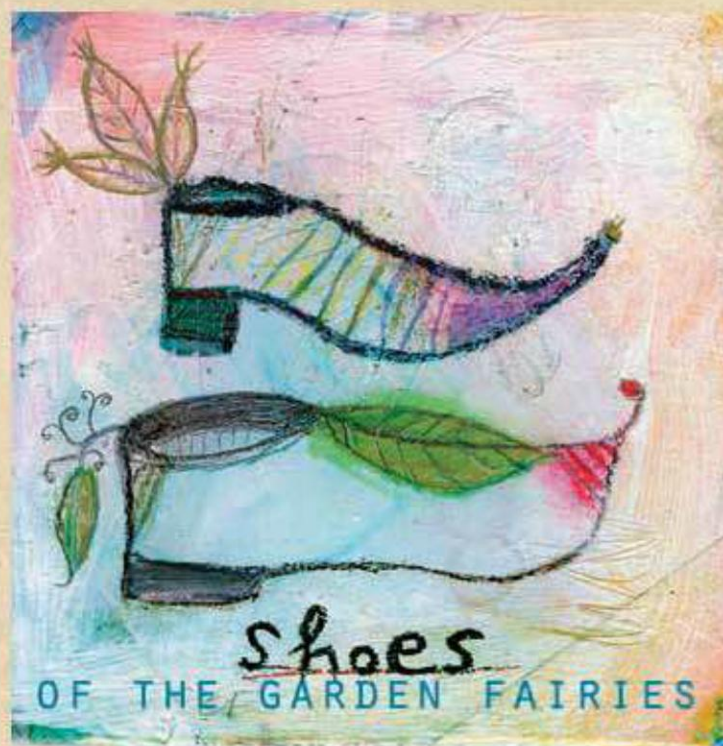


FUN EXERCISE

Your closet is full of items you love. Each item has an entire history with you and a unique style and personality of its own.

Pick something in your closet and create a whimsical homage to it. Even more fun, interview that item. Yes, that's right, interview your favorite item. I guarantee stories will evolve from that interview!

Here's a bit of an interview I had with my shoes and a series of drawings it inspired, which I later turned into a promo for myself.

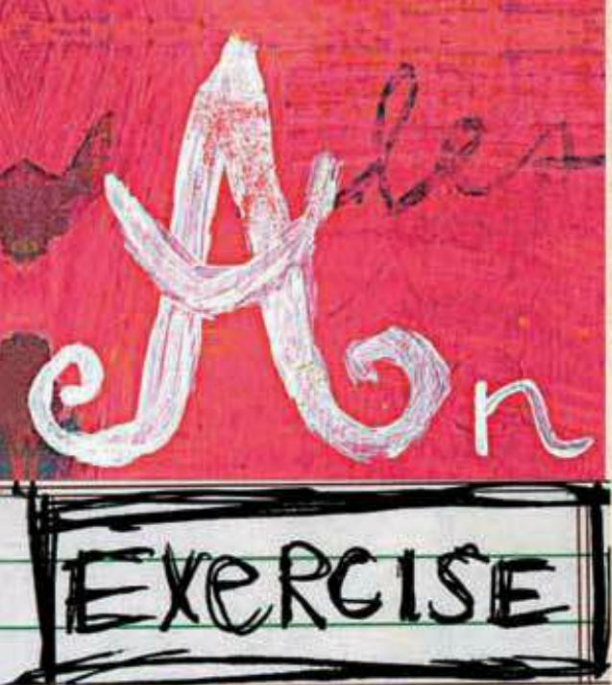


"Hello, shoes. Where did you come from?" I ask politely. "Out in the forest, living with fairies. Fairies like shiny red things," my red shoes said. "I see. That explains why I can't always find you."



YOUR OWN DREAM SYMBOLS

Dreams can be a wonderful source of imagery. Some dreams, more than others, will resonate with you upon waking and might deserve some attention. Dreams are also rich in our own internal symbols, many of which we haven't explored, but you might notice them popping up in your art. For me, gates and fences are important.



What are your muses saying today? Illustrate that conversation.

I was busy doing barn chores and thought I heard voices, but the only one within eyesight was the horse. “Hmmm,” I thought. “Must be hearing voices from the valley down below.”

But the voices continued, and I went out to look around the barnyard. And there was one of my chickens chatting with one of our newest farm members, our little donkey Lucia.

“How old are you, donkey?” the chicken asked.

“I’m one, and my name is Lucia.”

I stood somewhat out of sight, thinking my presence might stop the free flow of their chat.

But they saw me, and I’m quite pleased to tell you they invited me over.

“I suppose you already know this is Lucia,” said the chicken.

“Well, yes, I do,” I said. “I thought she would be a wonderful addition to our barnyard family.”

Soon other creatures appeared. Some I knew by name, but some I had not officially met, like the little chipmunk who stood at his house door watching with curiosity. The grasses all chimed in, “Hello, Lucia, nice to meet you. Please don’t eat us.”

And as I returned to the barn to finish chores, I saw the chicken’s children rushing over to meet Lucia.

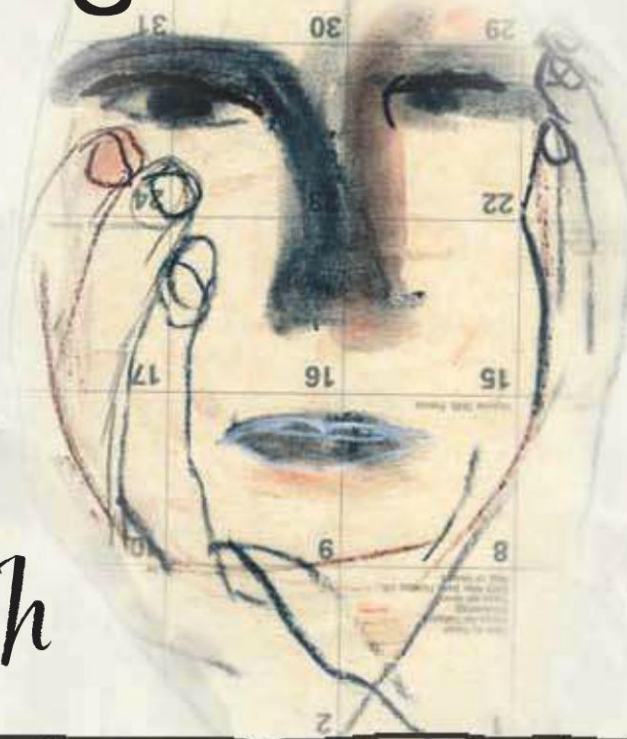
“We really like your big ears!” the young chicks said.





Chapter 4

Sharing Emotions



through

PERSONAL STORIES

Drawing and painting are cathartic ways to journey through upheaval. In the course of a lifetime we all face challenges, large and small. The feelings that surround these ups and downs can be fueled into opportunities for creative output. In this chapter, I'll share an exercise where you can process ideas and emotions that arise during such times.

Always remember that you have art as a gift to yourself; it can serve as a friend, therapist, or devil's advocate. The beauty of all art is twofold—it is personal expression you can savor for yourself, and if you choose, you can release it to the world for others to experience, engage in, learn from, or simply enjoy.



FROM THE HEART TO PAPER

Sometimes life sends you on an internal roller-coaster ride, tossing all sorts of emotions around. The death of a loved one, the ravaging illness of a friend, the loss of a pet, or changes at home or in a job can all trigger an array of raw emotions: stress, fear, anger, or hopelessness. The goal of this exercise is to let the making of art be a cathartic venue for those raw feelings. The journey you take in your head and heart is what's important not the art itself. You will begin to work on an image. While developing your work, you can continue to add to this surface, or when an image feels complete, you may want to move on to a new surface.

The concept for this exercise came to me when I was dealing with the impending death of my own father. It dawned on me that each photograph of him held a long story or memory within my heart, and it was the experience of remembering that was so vital, not the actual photo. During this exercise, as I worked on my surface, I got to a point where I decided I wanted to completely cover over my image and start a new work on top. By doing this, I felt like I was symbolically “letting go” of the past and moving on, just as I had to eventually accept this difficult loss and continue to live my life.



In any life, pictures hold memories, but it is your mind and heart that relive them. The photograph is less important than the journey you were on when you made the photograph. The photograph or postcard you send from vacation is not as important as the experience you had making the photograph.

"I paint in order not to cry." —Paul Klee



Note how I have taped the corners of the paper to a Masonite board. This allows me to move the piece around easily and also move it off my table if I need to.



PROCESSING EMOTION EXERCISE

Choose your preferred surface, either heavy paper, wood, or canvas. You might also want to gather pastels, collage scrap, adhesive, and a pair of scissors. You also need the following:

- One or multiple painting surfaces (more on this in next steps)
- White or black gesso
- Acrylic paint and any materials you choose

STEP 1:

Choose a working surface that can withstand multiple layers of paint and possibly rough handling. I suggest a heavy 150 or 300 lb (320 or 640 gsm) watercolor paper or a wood surface such as a pine board. Feel free to work on a larger surface such as a stretched canvas, as it is very physical to work on large surfaces. (Note: In this demonstration, I am working on 8-inch [20.3 cm] 150 lb [320 gsm] paper.)

Start by laying a “ground” on your surface. This can be white or black gesso or it can simply be a solid paint color of any kind. Note: I work with acrylic, which dries much faster than oil, and for this exercise will allow you to speed up the intervals between steps.



STEP 2:

Develop your surface with two colors of paint. In my example, I paint the entire surface with green acrylic. After about twenty minutes, I paint black acrylic over the entire surface. I often do this because now I can take white pastel and doodle or draw on the black surface. Having black over the green allows some color to come through, adding texture. It's just the way I always start any piece.

Consider using your fingertips as brushes. Not only can it lead to interesting shapes and textures, it is very sensual and healing to feel the paint on your fingers.



Allow abstract shapes to emerge on that surface. Here I've not only scribbled lightly with white pastel, I've also added a blue circle. This is a recurring symbol for me—be open to what shapes recur in your work as symbols. You can also see an area of rough scratches on the right of the surface; I created these with a nail.

STEP 3:

Draw what you feel. At this early stage, it's a very abstract process. In my example, I start with pastel and draw whatever I feel. You might even try closing your eyes so you aren't overthinking what you see on the paper. Just be loose and keep moving your hand, even if it seems clumsy or "silly."



STEP 4:

As I progress through this abstract stage, I enhance the circle shape and adjust the pastel blue to be more somber. I notice something in the scratch-mark area on the right and adjust it to be an abstract red shape (using red pastel), which I read as a symbolic “opening” or door. I’ve also wiped the white shapes slightly away—a benefit of using pastel. During this stage, stop. Look for any shapes or areas that draw your eye in. Focus on those areas but don’t try to figure out what they mean. It’s still very abstract. Work with adding some color or more definition in those areas. Explore them with an open mind, and try not to get tied to “what does this mean?”



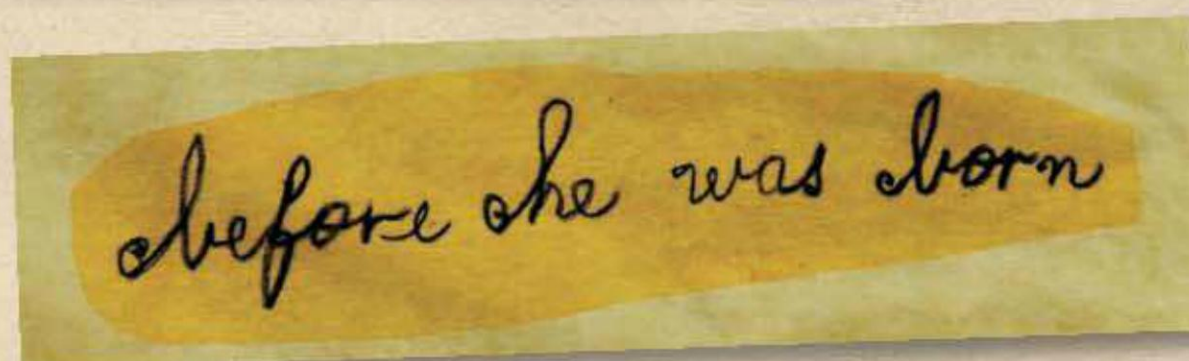
Image in progress, ready for next step.

STEP 5:

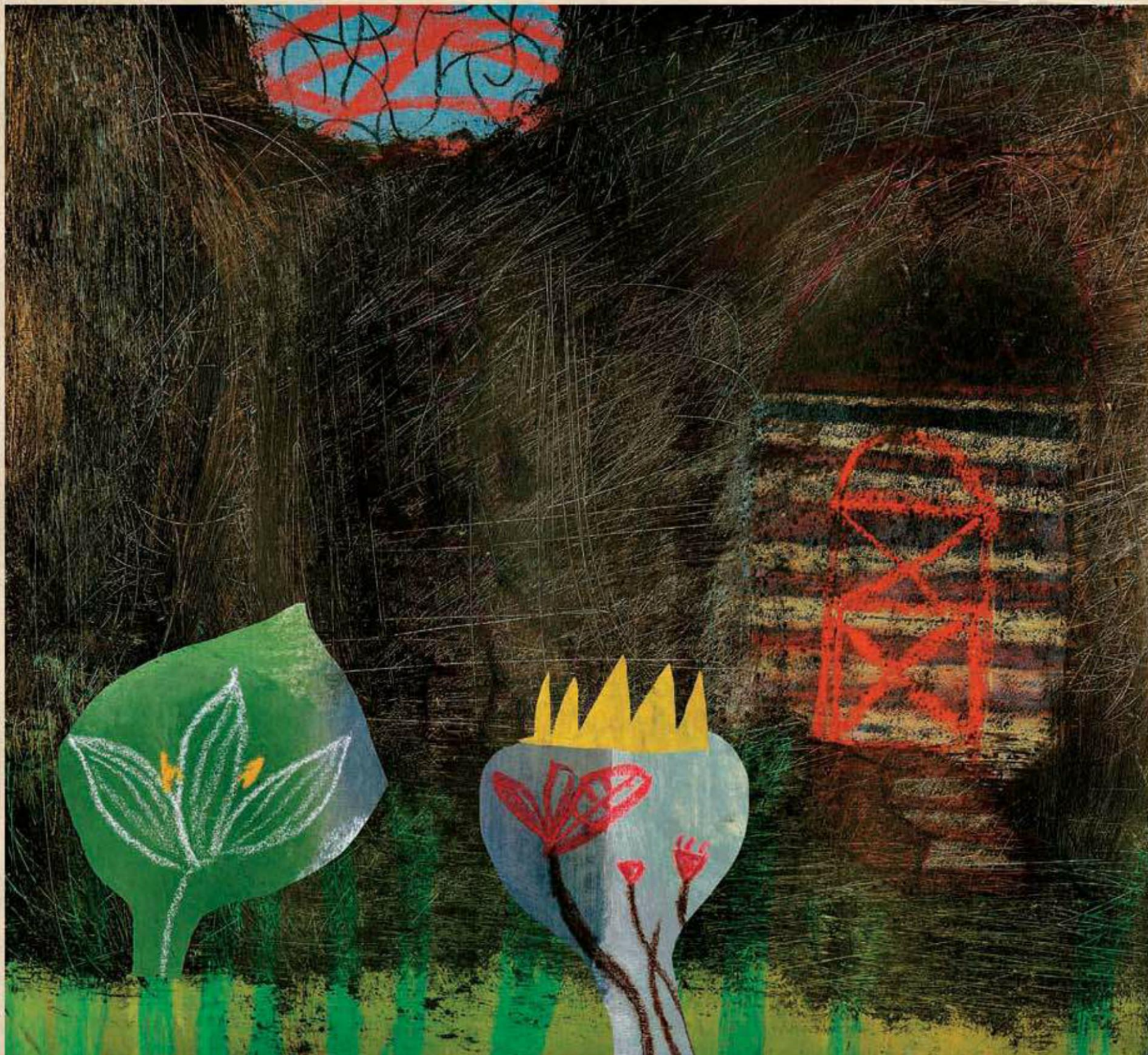
Your mind will be percolating as you work at this abstract stage—let it.

The event or issue in your life that has you trying this exercise will be on your mind as you work away at this abstract stage. As your mind rewinds old memories or thoughts, continue to draw and paint.

As I was working, the white shapes I had erased, along with the green area at the painting's bottom, reminded me of my father's love of his gardens. Even though I erased the white area, I am thinking of his gardens.



Because I'm also a writer, I chose to write words down for each finished image. I scanned the words, along with the art, and kept it in a journal for myself. Feel free to incorporate words in your exercise.



Finished image #1 | I take a break and document this image for myself with the scanner.

STEP 6:

As I think of my father's early gardens, I begin cutting out color shapes from scrap and painting or drawing on top of them. I decide one needs a crown. Again, this is a subconscious decision to place a crown on a flower.

Even though the image is still very abstract, I feel it is a finished piece, especially after the words "before he was born" come into my head.



This is the previous image, which I will now paint over.

STEP 7:

Begin a new image, either by covering up the old surface or starting on a new surface.

Note: In this exercise, I am choosing to cover up each image I create and repaint a new image on the same surface. This is cathartic for me and very symbolic of “letting go.” But you can choose to start the next piece on a new surface, maintaining each image as an original.

In the last step, I had noticed the floral quality of some of the abstract shapes. I notice the green area at the bottom of the piece and consciously decide to make it grass blades.

*He must have talked
to the grasses*

The grass blades make me think that my 84-year-old father was once a little child, playing in grass, far from death. I wondered what his child activities were, and many words and images came to me, but these words resonated within me and provoked this image to develop.



FINISHED IMAGE #2

Note how the orange structure has been covered up from the last piece, but I've allowed it to stay as a ghostly image here. After I completed this image, I made a scan of it and then covered the surface again to hide most of the original.



This is the previous image that I will now cover.

STEP 8:

A few days pass before I begin this new image. Take as much time as you need between steps. I once watched an old, grainy movie of my father as a child floating little cardboard boats in city gutters with his brothers. I watched it in the presence of my then-84-year-old father, and that movie and the memory it held, made him emotional. Those thoughts were with me as I sat down to start a new piece in the exercise.

He played in streams
in the street with cardboard
boats

These words resonated with me as I worked, so I wrote them down.



FINISHED IMAGE #3:

Notice how the dark area in the previous image has now been painted over with blue. And note there is still a ghostlike image in the child's head on this new piece, a remnant from the previous piece. Only a small amount of the former painting is left in the bottom left corner, where you see some remnants of yellow.



This is the previous image that I will now cover up.

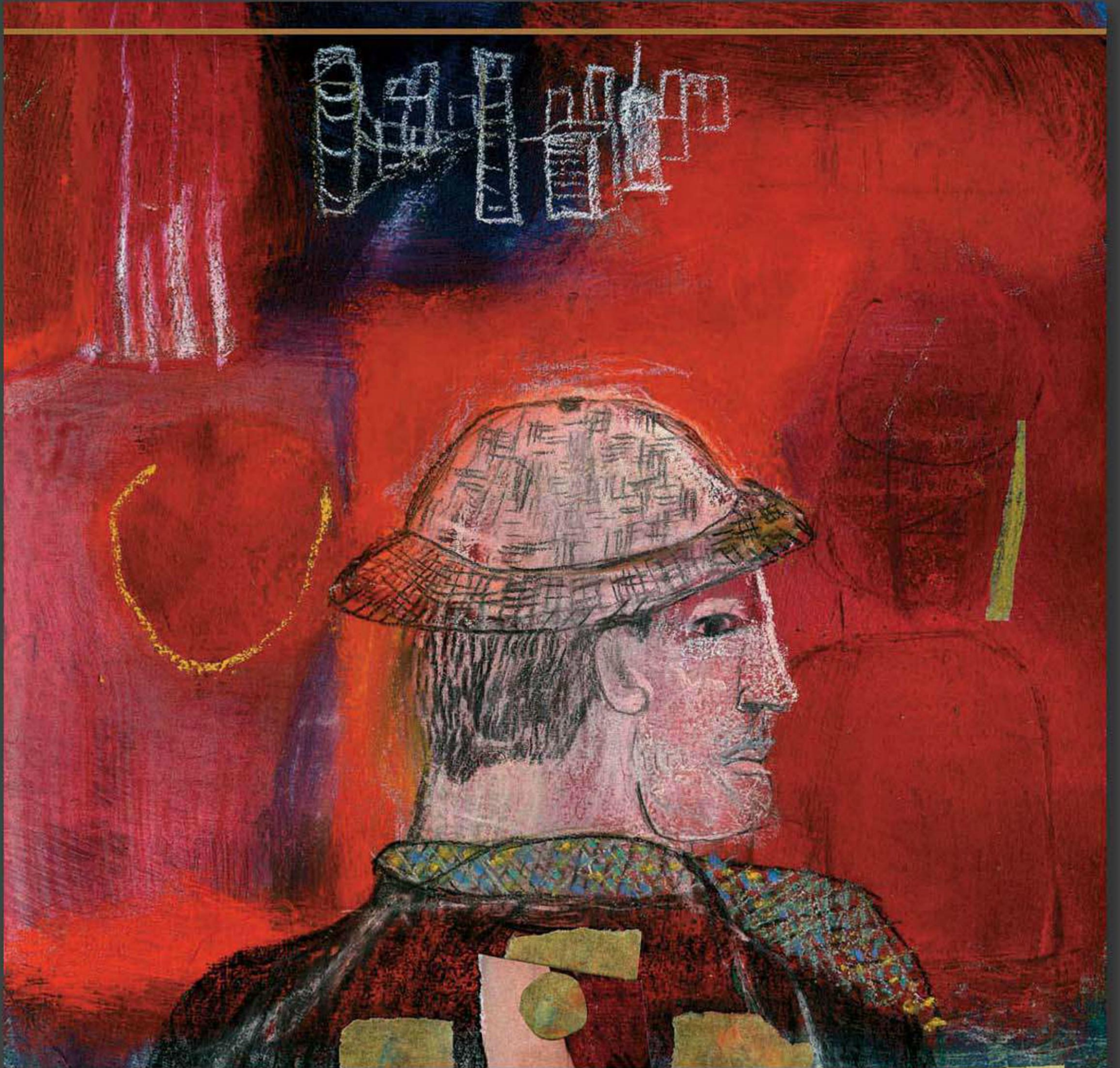
STEP 9:

Several weeks pass before I begin this new piece. I remember not really wanting to cover this piece up but knew it was a symbolic letting go. By covering up each piece, you are letting go of a tangible object and surrendering yourself to the experience of art itself.

Once again I cover most of the surface, with a bold red. Note that the ball shape of the previous image has been covered, but an abstract reminder of it is there. The blue is still partially there too, as is a sliver of yellow on the right.

Letting a memory come out in the open

If you have chosen to do this exercise by making individual paintings and are not covering up each one, the process is still cathartic. As you relive a memory and paint it, you are letting it out into the open, leaving your energy free to focus on present and future events.

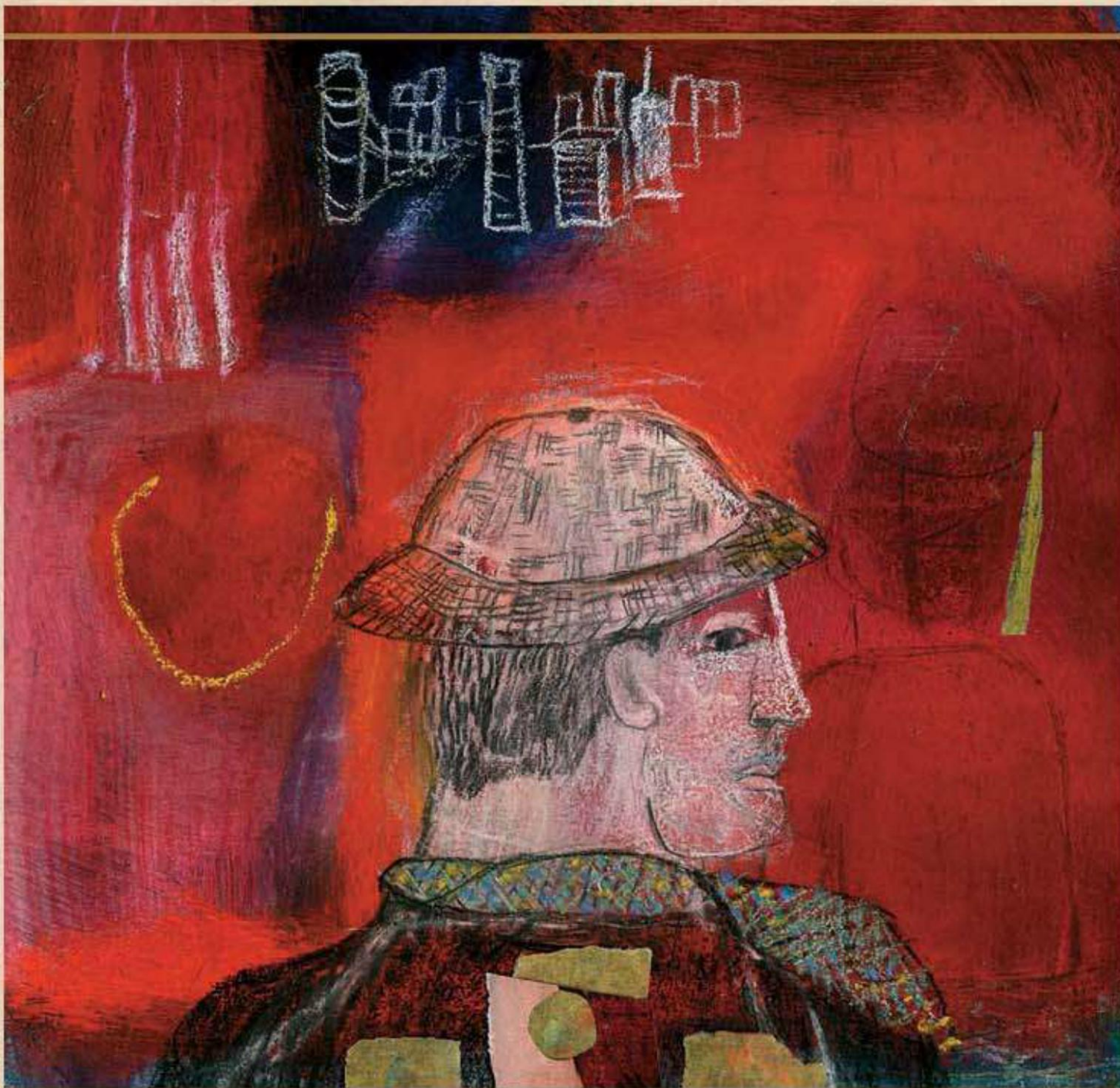


FINISHED IMAGE #4:

As a young, self-absorbed teen, my father went off to work each day. I didn't give it much thought. But as his death approached, I yearned for pictures of him doing everyday things, like walking to work. He always wore a tie and a tweed hat and scarf.

*Where was I when
he stood here?*

Again, these words resonated as I painted. Even if you aren't a writer, listen to the words in your head while you paint.



This is the previous image that I will now cover up | Note how the bottom textures of his coat still can be seen in the final image on the right.

FINAL STEPS:

Weeks pass between steps. Once again I painted over the previous image with white gesso, and then I began redrawing a new image on the same surface. I did not choose colors consciously, and as somber as these are, I find them very beautiful and raw.

It's up to you how many images you create. As you go through each step, your emotions will be expressed in your own inner textures, colors, words, and shapes.

Maybe a day of creating two to four images will be enough for you. For myself, I reached a point after a few weeks where it felt natural and okay to stop. This final piece felt very much like a "good-bye" to me, like the ending of a love song.

*Don't attach yourself
to the outcome.*

Elements of this exercise can be applied to your daily art projects. How? It's easy to get "attached" to what you want the piece to look like. You struggle along for a day and feel like you're getting nowhere. Rather than hanging on to what you think the image should be, try covering 50 percent of the image with gesso and leaving some elements you feel in tune with. Most of the time, you'll end up with a stronger piece. And if you don't, start over.

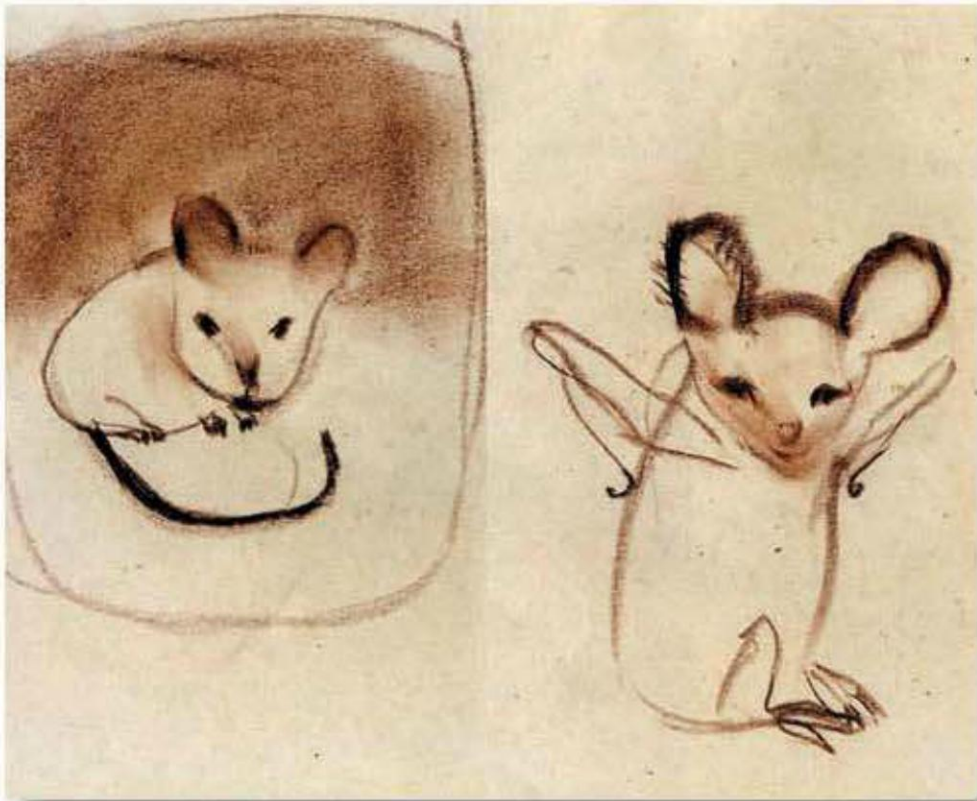


FINAL IMAGE IN SERIES.

I remember exactly what I was thinking while creating this piece—that it seemed like yesterday when he was sitting in his favorite chair, smoking his favorite pipe. I was feeling the textures of a rough wool sweater and remembering his gray, bushy eyebrows, which I exaggerate here for my own pleasure.

At this stage, I felt it was a natural place to end the exercise and painted the image over in black. I stuck it in a pile to be reused for future projects.

"There's a bit of magic in everything,
and loss to even things out."
—Lou Reed



MORE EXAMPLES OF CATHARTIC WORKS OF ART

No matter what life throws at you, drawing and painting are physical, cathartic exercises to help you through your journey. The ride might be bumpy, but the physical act of drawing can soothe the heart, purge some fears, and help you move on to the next level.

(Left)

If you fear it, draw it. I respect bats and their purpose, but I admit getting anxious when they fly over my head. I started drawing bats and soon began to see them as mice with wings. Since I'm not afraid of mice, this has helped me immensely.

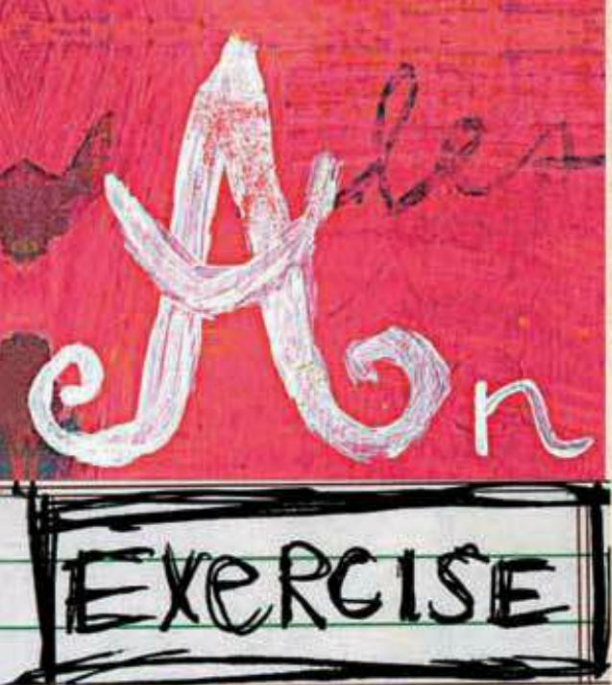


This piece is about changes and moving on. When I moved from a well-loved home, I experienced a grieving for the many things I would leave behind in my yard. I painted pictures of the trees and plants I loved as a way to say thank you.



cow heaven

Memorialize a Lost Friend | A painting is a cathartic way to put a friend to rest. This was a memorial for a dairy cow. I thought she deserved a cold glass of milk.



Are you on a roller-coaster ride of emotion?

Express it. Draw it. Paint it.
Do it for yourself.

The feelings that came from the death of our beloved sheep, Rosie, were intense and blanketed me in mourning for some time. Not knowing she was carrying triplets, I had adjusted her feed portion inaccurately, and she died from nutrition imbalance. I walked around doing barnyard chores for many days in a cloud of sadness. At some point, I began drawing my many animal muses again, but what came out on paper was a sea of crying animals. This was art's gift to me—it allowed me to feel camaraderie with my daily companions. I needed to feel that the entire farm understood my sadness.







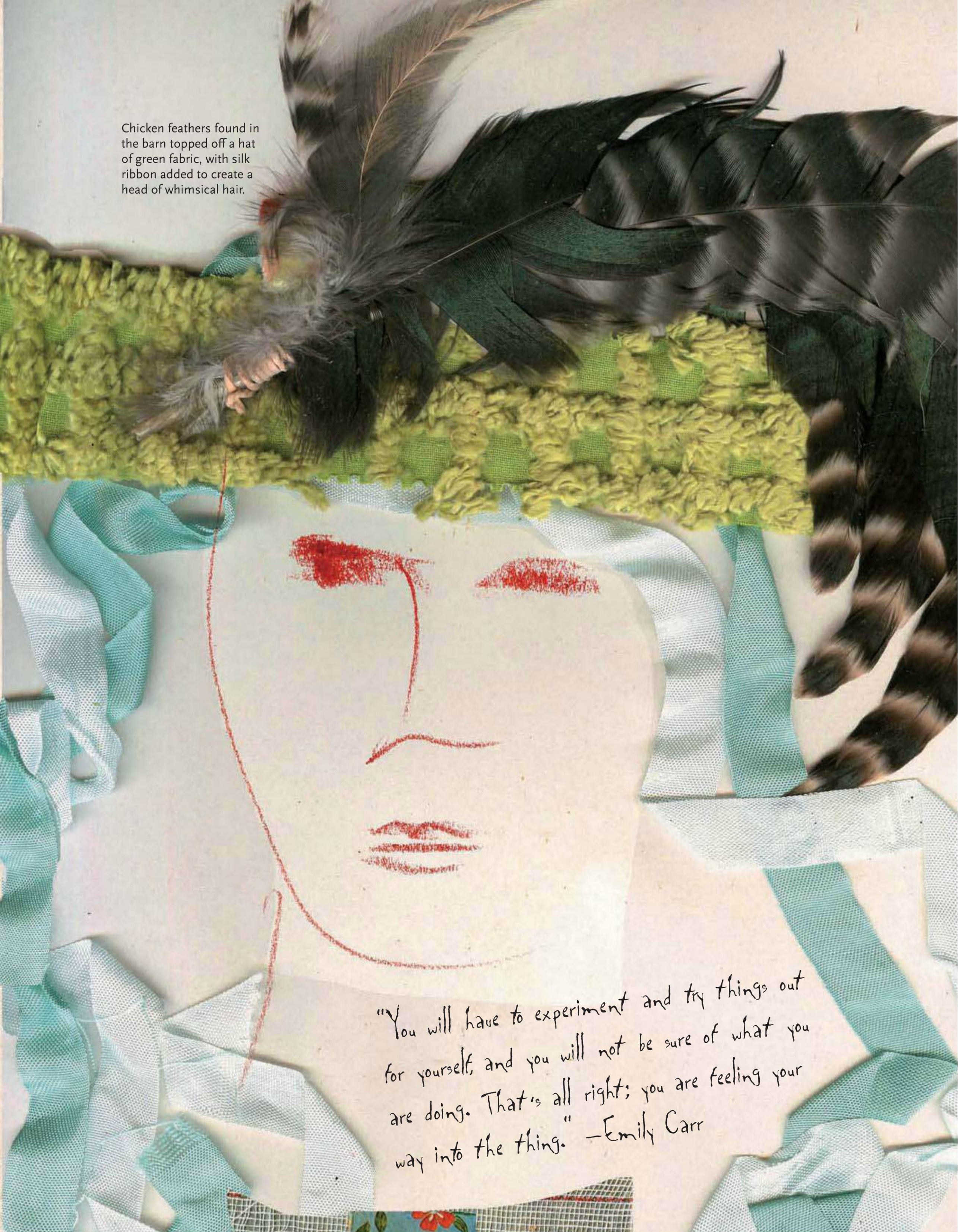
Chapter 5 Incorporating **TEXTURES** & **FOUND MATERIALS**

On any given day as you walk around your world, there are fabrics to be touched, odd buttons with tarnished patinas sitting in boxes, and items from the natural world that beg to be picked up. Look at the objects in your world as gifts for your art. They can enhance an illustration with texture, color layers, and patterns, not to mention whim.

This chapter will show you ideas for using found objects, along with collage, in your work. I'll also briefly demonstrate a "layered" technique using the computer to scan and incorporate textures and found objects.

Keep an open mind and eye as you go about your day. Next time you find yourself in an antiques store, look for old magazines, newspapers, boxes (which often have wonderful imagery and type), or postcards to incorporate into your work. Not only will you find the type from past eras is unique, but often the worn materials add a unique texture or ambiance to your art.

Another fun source for textures and color is vintage fabrics. You can cut and collage them into pieces or scan them and then incorporate them into a digital version of the illustration. Old books can also be scanned for interesting type and shapes that appeal to you.



Chicken feathers found in the barn topped off a hat of green fabric, with silk ribbon added to create a head of whimsical hair.

"You will have to experiment and try things out for yourself, and you will not be sure of what you are doing. That's all right; you are feeling your way into the thing." —Emily Carr

BE OPEN TO THE UNUSUAL

Often an item can add just the right “touch” as you finish an illustration, or it might inspire additional ideas that have gone unearthed. Once again your daily world becomes a library of inspirations for your art. Be open to experimentation. For example, paste fabric on paper and paint over it, adding texture.

Try looking at objects you might normally dismiss. A dying rose or its petals, a weed, a blade of grass—play with incorporating these items into your work.

If you work on paper, try sewing fabrics, papers, and items down to the surface. Working on wood allows you to hammer items into the surface, such as nails, buttons, or tin. Not only will this add dimension and texture to the piece, it might give you shapes, colors, or symbols that you hadn’t thought of before.

Some of the examples in this chapter use a computer layering technique with Photoshop and scanning. I will demonstrate that at the end of the chapter.



Here are two examples of flowers and weeds used in an image. The image above incorporates a photo of a decaying rose. On the left, Queen Anne’s lace is placed under tissue paper and then the borders are sewn with invisible thread to hold it in the final piece.



Consider found objects as one more source of texture and color.



Burlap scrap from old seed bags and feathers from the barn inspired this silly collage piece, created on watercolor paper. I love hats, so I am always inspired to create creatures in hats. Here, the instructions for making the hat are included as a text element collaged to the surface.



SEW, STAPLE, TAPE, TEAR, HAMMER

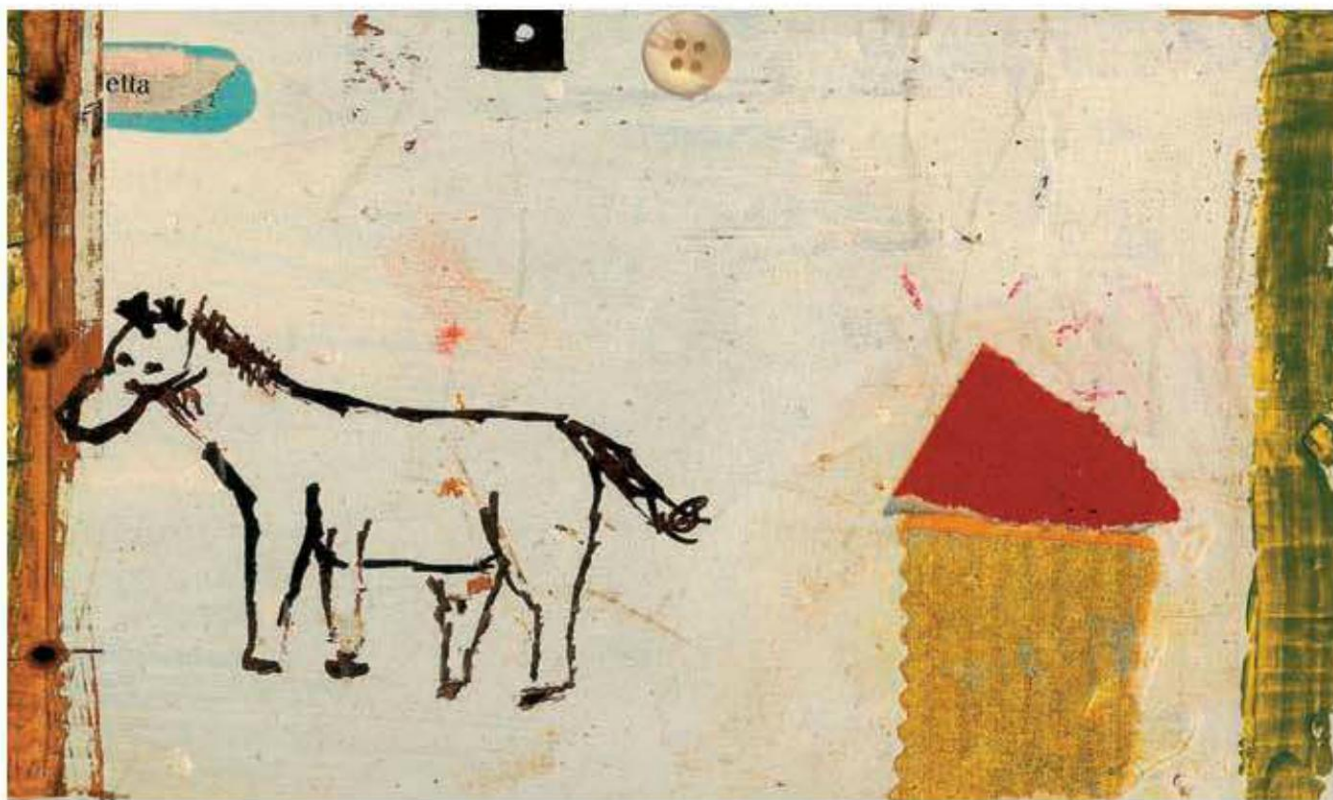
Play with different ways to apply items and alter surfaces. This allows shapes, textures, and colors to emerge in your art that you might not have discovered otherwise. Look at the shape of an object and ask yourself what that shape might represent or symbolize in your world. A yellow button becomes a sun, for example.

(Left)

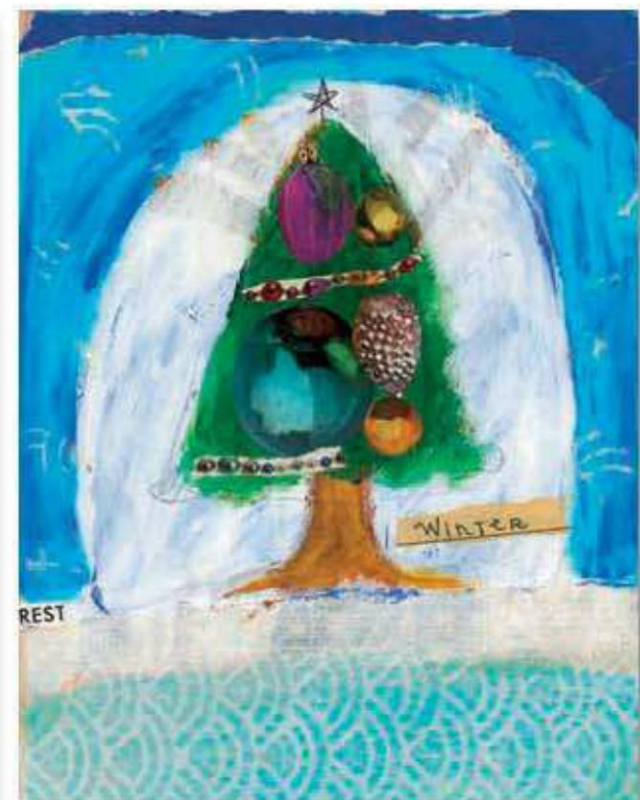
Acrylic and pastel on paper | Scraps of fabric are sewn together and onto the paper surface to create an upper border.



An actual feather is taped to the hat on this piece, created on tissue paper. I had intended to sew it down with invisible thread but liked the splash of green. Be open to the colors and shapes that emerge as you work.



This piece is painted on old barn wood with the original nail holes still visible on the left side. A white button hammered into the surface symbolizes a cloud. A square black bolt is glued to the wood, and the torn papers are collaged to the surface. All the items are whimsical but have symbolic meaning.



Acrylic and collage on newsprint surface | Ripped tissue paper, varnished down on the surface, gives the effect of snowflakes for this holiday image.

MAGAZINE AND PAPER SCRAP

Think back to childhood. Wasn't it fun to look at magazines and cut out pretty colors for doll clothes? So now you're a tad bit older, but magazines are still full of inspiring colors and objects. Cuttings of fabrics, objects, and flowers can add content to your work as well as color and pattern.

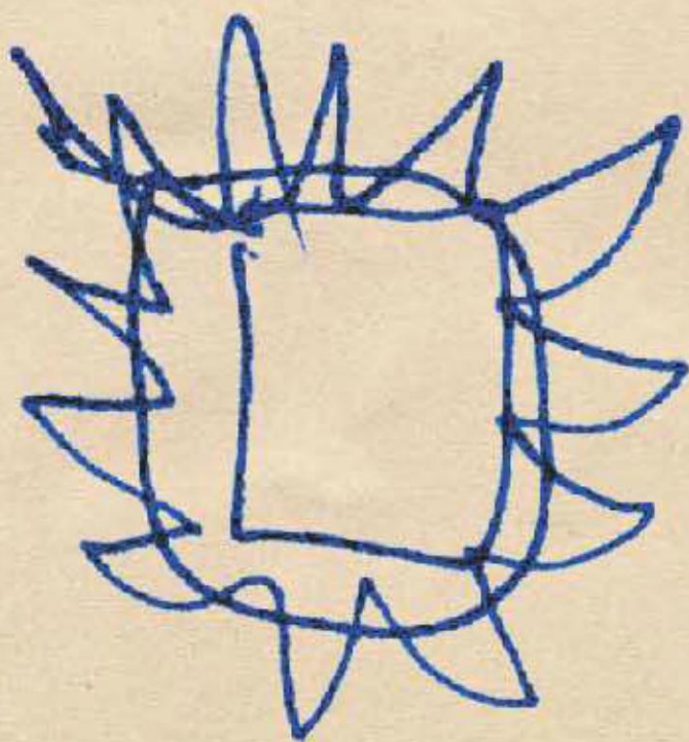
Try incorporating images of fabric to create a sense of style and ambiance. Collage items can also help define a country or specific subject. For example, if you were working on a piece about Paris, a collaged image of the Eiffel Tower would give it instant place recognition.

TIP After you complete a day of painting, move the painting to different areas in the house. As you walk around during your day, glance at the painting. For some reason this can help you see the image with fresh eyes and opens you up to making small adjustments, such as adding one collage piece, that inevitably enhance the composition.



The colors and fabrics of Italy come across in this piece, thanks to collage.

TIP Get your idea on paper first and do some drawing and painting before looking at magazines for collage scrap. If you jump ahead too quickly and start applying scrap before your idea has developed, the piece can suffer.





Acrylic and collage on paper | Curtains, bookshelves, and a hint of a candle give this piece a sense of space and elegance. The bottom collaged paper adds a patterned border that feels like carpet.



Jewelry images from catalogs, cut out and collaged onto the paper surface of this pet memorial, create a fanciful background of shining stars. The client's dog was an avid stargazer, and this piece wouldn't have been as powerful without the collaged stars. The *Queen of the Stars* title is written on linen and sewn onto the surface.

LAYERING EXERCISE

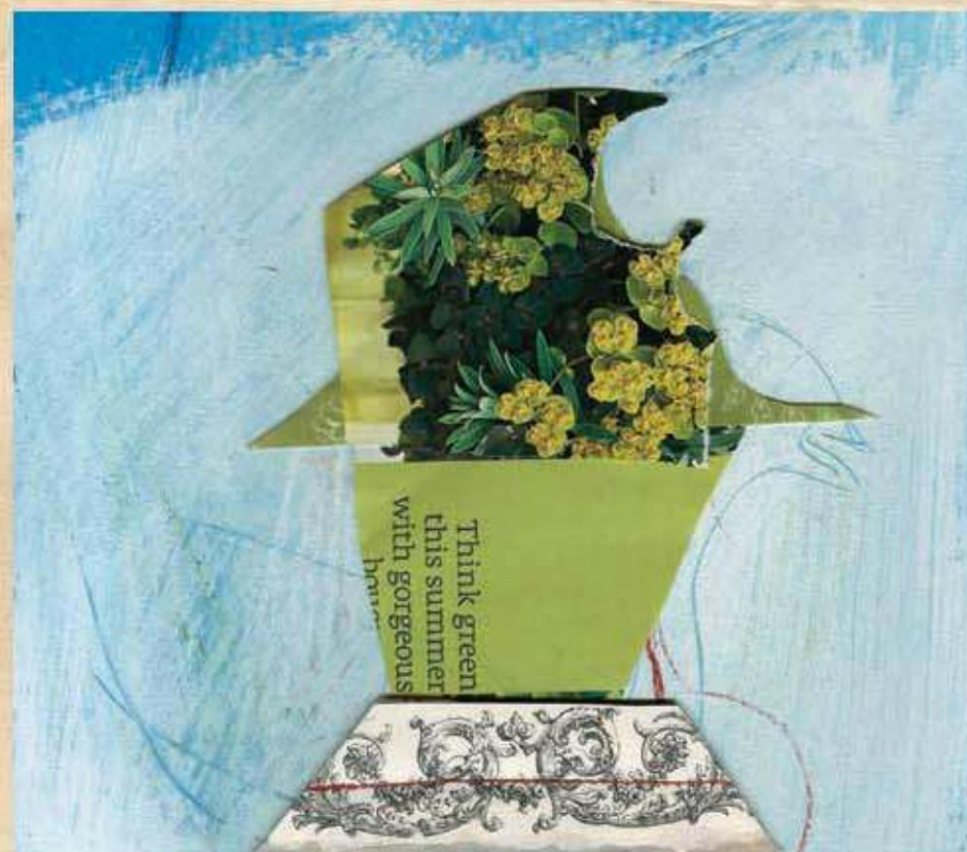
Create a simple image using magazine scrap and liquid varnish. For this exercise, I am working on 6-inch (15 cm) watercolor paper that had already been primed with a layer of blue acrylic and white gesso.

Even the tiniest bits of magazine scrap can enhance an illustration. Once you complete a piece, walk away from it for an hour or more. Periodically stop and arrange bits of magazine scrap, adjusting them on the surface (without adhering with varnish) to see which pieces speak to you. Sometimes the tiny collage additions at the end of a piece make a huge difference.



STEP 1

Rip out collage pieces from a magazine. Search for appealing colors or shapes. Spread the pieces on your surface and start to look for shapes and arrangements you like. Don't varnish anything down at this point; just play and have fun.



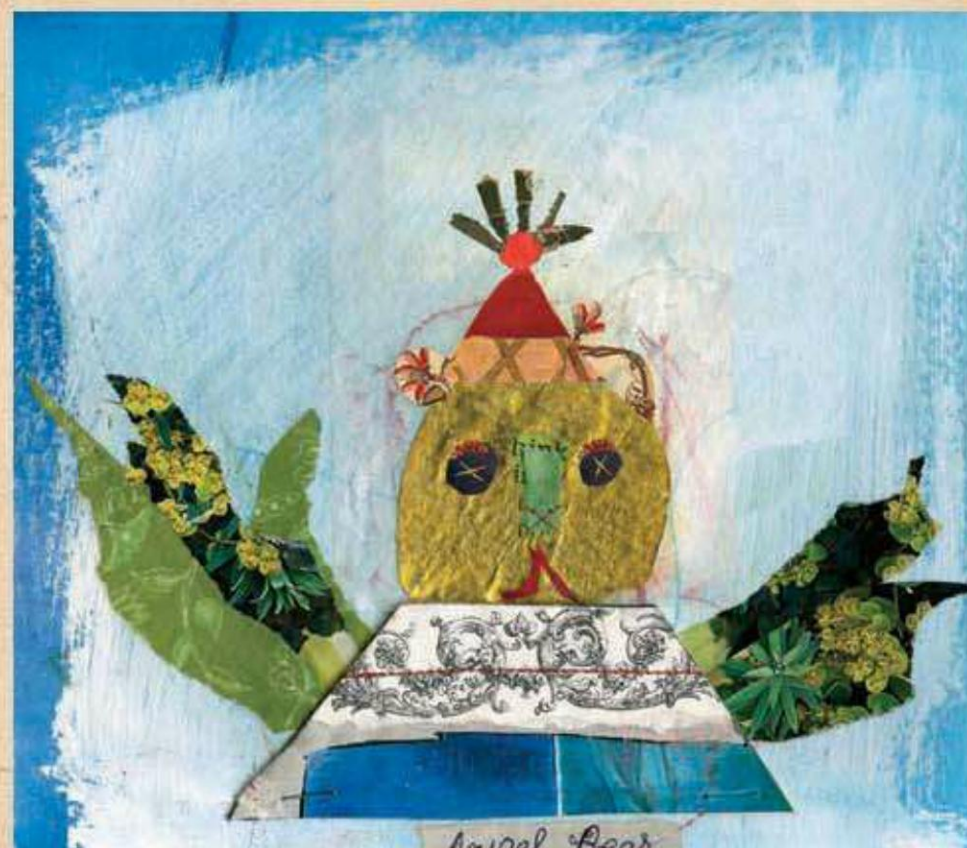
STEP 2

I first see a face (and another hat!) and start to make a person. I haven't varnished anything down yet.



STEP 3

Soon a buglike creature begins to form as I play with the shapes. I add some gold scrap now and some type I like.



STEP 4

What I thought was a bug now feels more like a bear, and he needed a hat. I varnish the pieces to the surface and add the title "Angel Bear" with newsprint scrap. I take the type out above the head.

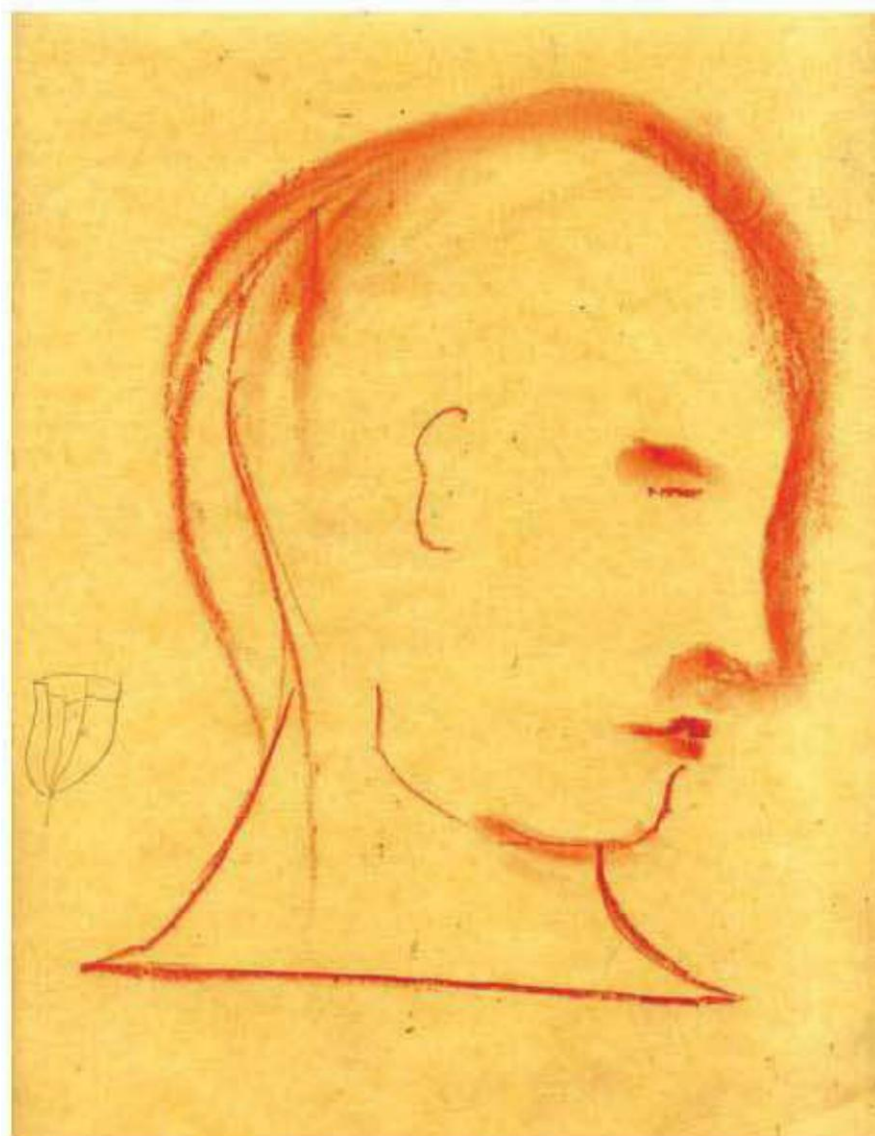
USING THE COMPUTER TO SCAN AND LAYER YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

Equipment used for this technique is an Epson scanner, a Mac computer, and Adobe Photoshop. A technique I often use is digital layering. Portions from my originals, magazine clippings, fabric, or natural items are scanned and then layered into a digital Photoshop file. When the image is finished, it is merged to create one seamless digital “original” piece. This digital original can then be made into a print.

Depending on the topic, scanned layers can add content, type, shadows, textures, or drama in a way that I might not be able to achieve through traditional drawing or painting. I will walk you through the steps of several “layered” images.



Visualize this technique as an open-faced sandwich. The bottom layer of bread is your background. Each item you add is a layer. The only difference is that all the layers are merged together with the background at the end to make a seamless digital original.



STEP 1:

The concept of this illustration is green eco-friendly shampoos. I begin with a simple sketch of a face, drawn with pastel on tissue paper. This becomes the background.

STEP 2:

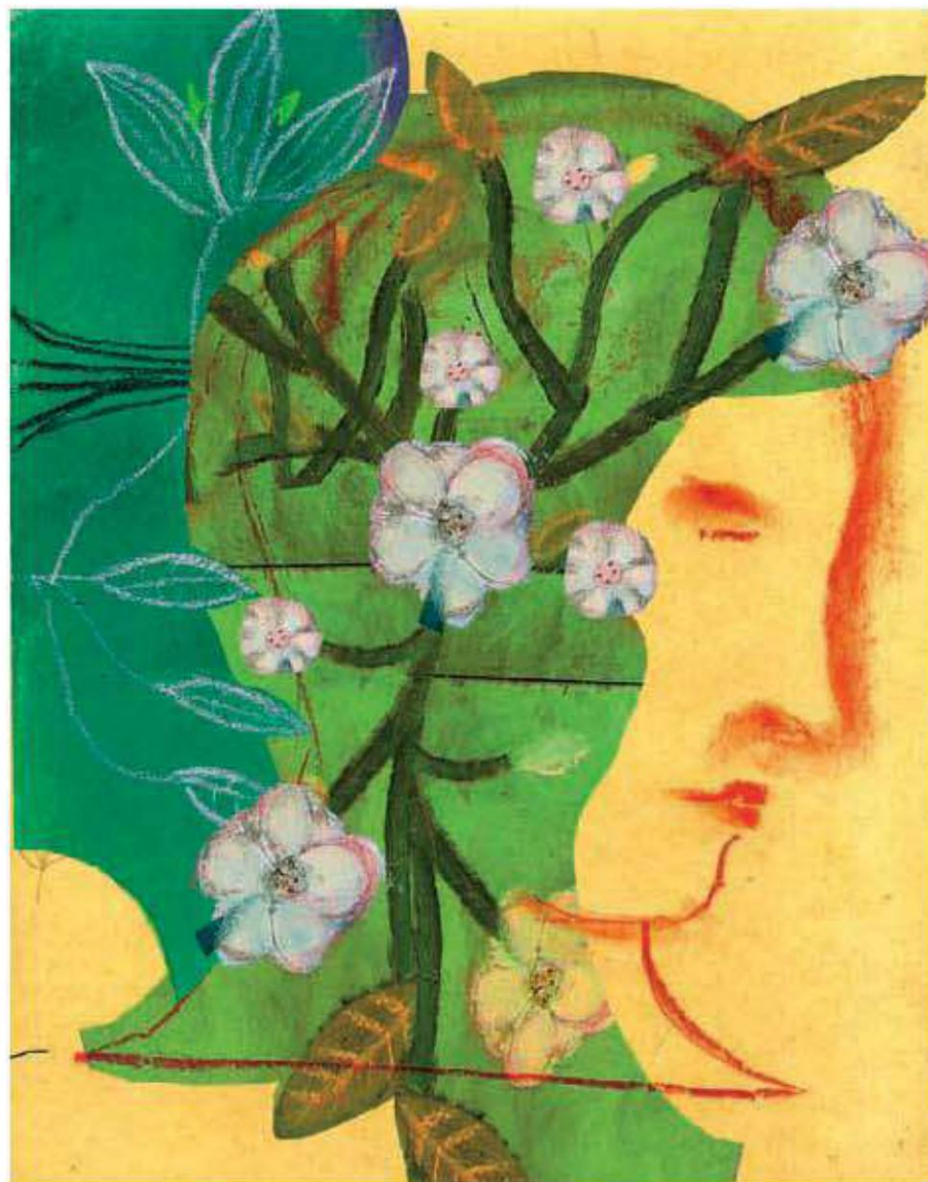
I look through the digital scan library of my many originals, looking for green/nature images. I choose the two originals shown on the opposite page.

Photoshop is a good skill to acquire as an artist. It opens up a world of options to manipulate your work.



STEP 3:

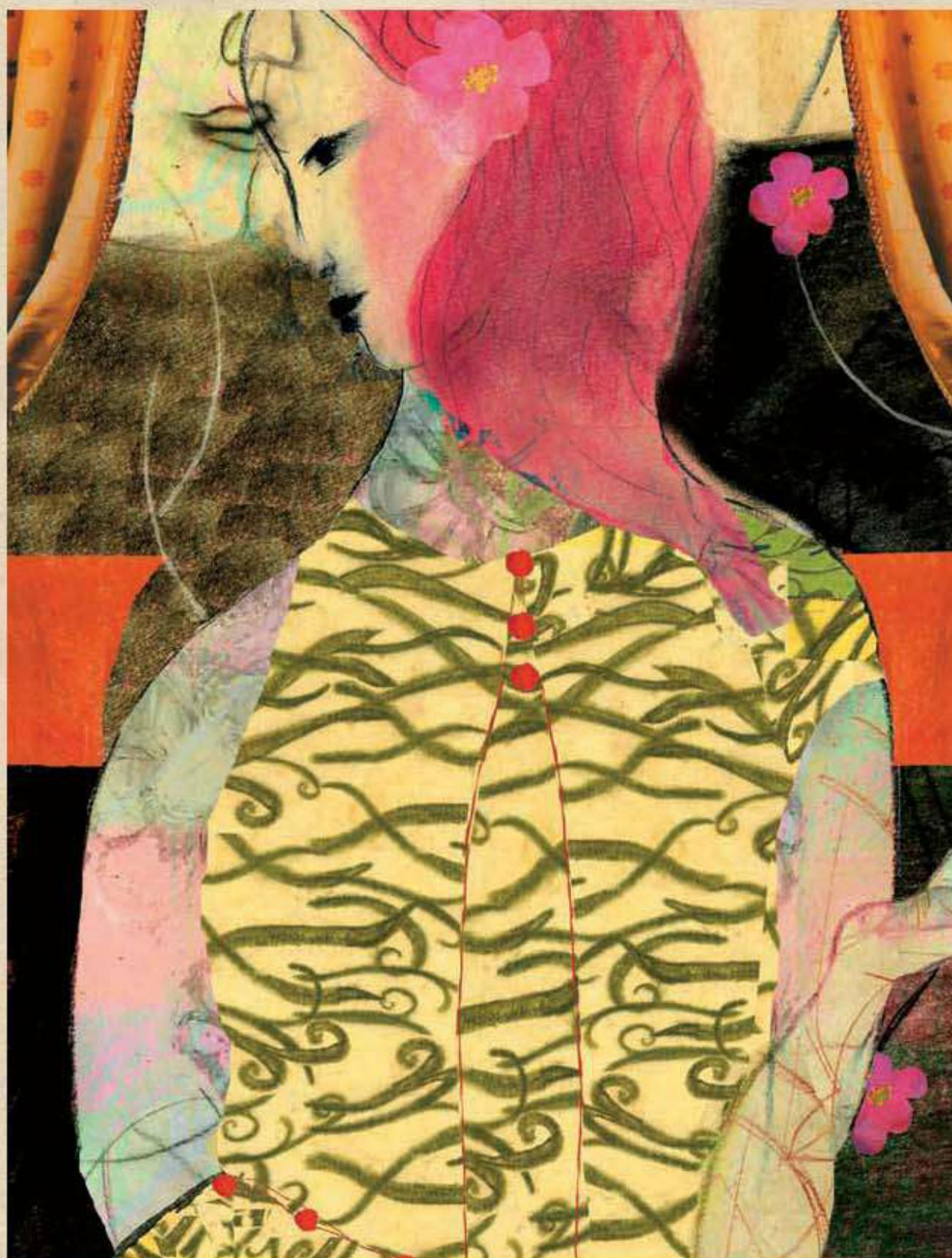
This is where your skill level comes into play. Using Photoshop, I open up the scan of original, left, above. I outline the area I want, copy it, and paste it in as layer in the image below. I do not merge it yet. I also adjust the color to become even more saturated green.



STEP 4:

I open the scan of original (top, right) #2 above. Again I cut and paste the area I want to use, still using Photoshop. And I adjust colors. When I am satisfied with the new images, I "merge" the layers in Photoshop, and I end up with just one digital file.

Here are two good examples of the layering technique.



This is a promo image for Mother's Day.

THE BACKGROUND:

Black pastel line drawing of a man and woman created on tissue paper, scanned

LAYER 1:

Created the dress pattern by cutting and pasting the pattern from another original/scan

LAYER 2:

Added a dark background with a scan

LAYER 3:

Added the orange shape from another scanned image

LAYER 4:

Added the pink flowers and curtains by copying from another scanned original

LAYER 5:

Added a hazy pattern over the woman's arms by scanning elsewhere and layering

LAYER 6:

Added small red beads for belt and buttons to balance color



This illustration is for an article in the Los Angeles Times about helping seniors stay at home as they age.

THE BACKGROUND:

Pastel line drawing of a woman, drawn on tissue paper

LAYER 1:

Drew arms, hands, cat on another piece of tissue paper, then scanned it

LAYER 2:

Drew houses and teapot on a separate tissue paper and scanned it

LAYER 3:

Added fabric pattern by scanning magazine scrap

LAYER 4:

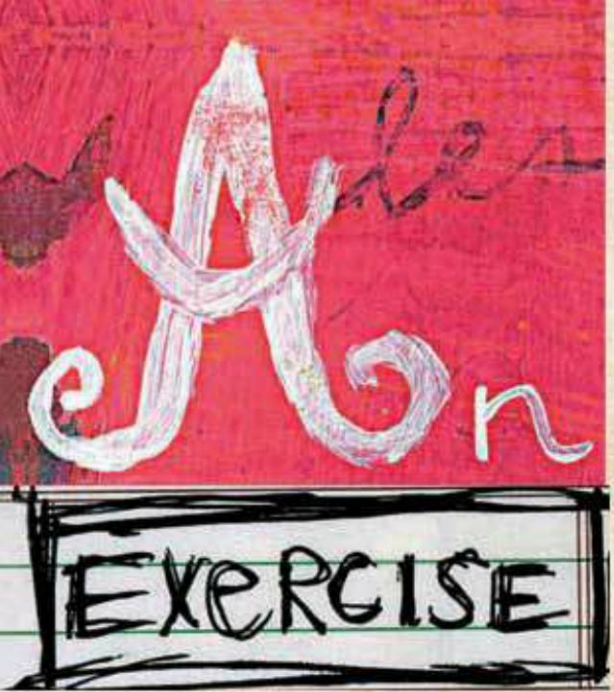
Drew an organic pattern, scanned it, and layered it on the dress

FINAL TOUCHES:

Scanned and layered in leaves, color tint to hair, flower, and prescription bottle

Digital Options

Think of Photoshop layering as a tool to add to your belt. Digital layering has real benefits, especially to the commercial illustrator. Once you have a library of originals scanned, they provide infinite ways to add color, texture, and content to your pieces. Layering also allows you to make small digital tweaks to a piece without starting all over. For example, I find it challenging to draw hands, so Photoshop allows me to create a separate “layer” of hands; then I can make adjustments to the hands without ruining what I’ve already done.



Find some scrap and found objects.

Make yourself a happy hat.

Her name was Olive Oil, and she was a little sheep. Oh, she was an adult sheep but was very tiny, so instead of being out with the big ewes of the flock, she stayed behind in the barnyard with the younger sheep. But she didn't mind, for she was very happy to spend her day in nature.

Olive Oil especially loved springtime. And every spring she made herself a new hat for the season. She loved hats. Maybe it was because her mother, and her aunties, and her grandmama all wore hats, but whatever the reason, she loved wearing hats and making them. She'd find pretty leaves, chicken feathers, twigs, flower heads, and little bits of this and that, and she'd make a hat. The entire barnyard always knew spring had arrived when Olive Oil paraded around in her new hat.



One needs a
new Hat



Chapter 6

When

THINGS

aren't

WORKING

Every artist's energy has an ebb and flow, and sometimes the flow stops. But it's usually temporary and can often be a time to simply replenish one's self. Or it might take doing something really drastic ... like making puppets.

In this chapter, we'll look at some simple energy boosters and find inspiration through working three-dimensionally. One important thing to remember: Art is a discipline. You have to work through challenges, and you work through them by actively drawing and painting on a consistent basis. While artists will have periods when they get burned out or are in a rut, you need to continue actively practicing your drawing, art, and storytelling. If you walk away every single time you feel stuck, you won't get anywhere.



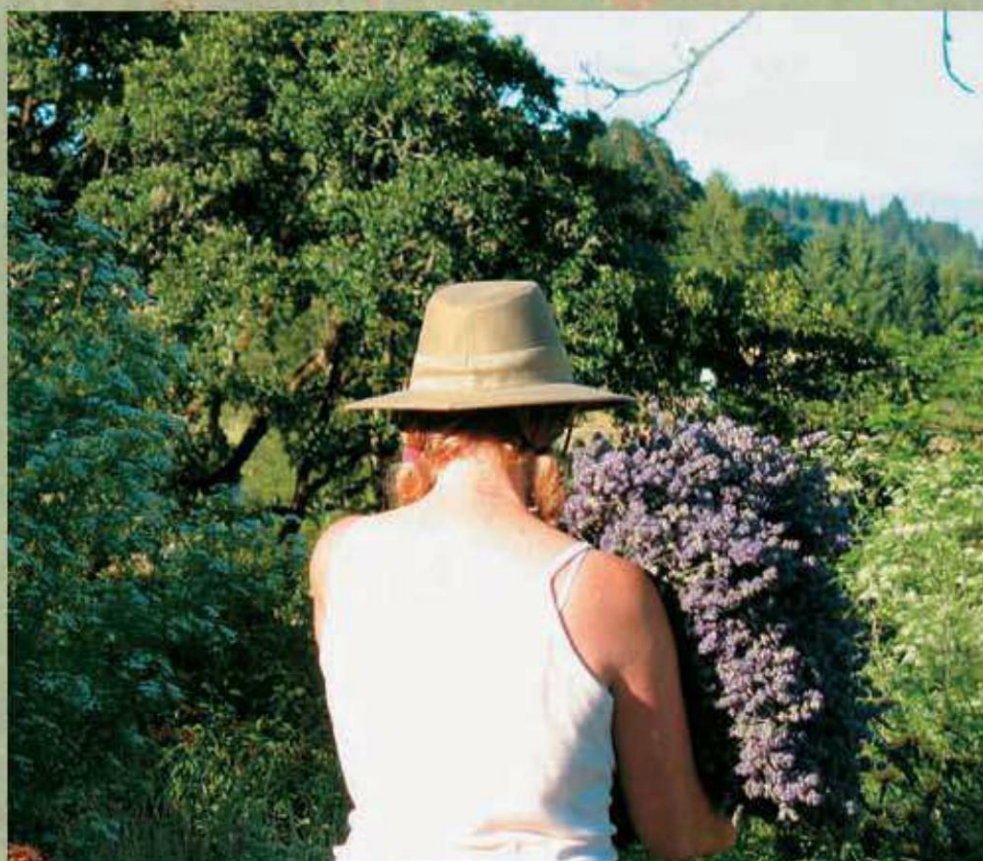
Freeing up Creative Time

If you feel you're not accomplishing enough creative work due to family, deadlines, or life's tasks, consider making one small change to your daily routine that would free up one solid hour of time just for you. I often am asked how I get so much art and writing done with so many farm tasks, and the answer is that sometimes I don't get art done! But making one small adjustment can free up time. For example, I vowed to get the majority of my email done by 11 a.m. This allowed me to have four consecutive hours of creative time in the afternoon.

Creative Times in Your Head

When is your creative brainstorming time? Use it to your advantage, even if it's only five minutes. Just because you aren't drawing doesn't mean you aren't percolating stories and ideas in your mind. Give yourself permission to explore this way. For me, it's while I fall asleep or lying in bed early in the morning.





Seek ways to drink in nature's replenishing energy. Here the artist visits with her donkeys and works in her garden.

WORKING THROUGH BLOCK WITH NATURE *and Movement*

An old farmer once told me, “Keep takin’ water out of the well, sooner or later it’s gonna go dry. You have to walk away; let it fill back up from the earth.”

When you first get hit with creative blues, change your immediate **environment** and look to Mother Nature for an energy tonic. Physical activity and letting your eyes and body experience other natural stimuli help replenish your creative well.

Try taking fifteen-minute sabbaticals from the drawing table. Take a fifteen-minute walk or a break with nature somewhere. No matter where you live, you can commune with the air or sky for fifteen minutes. These breaks give you a fresh perspective when you return to your work.

When creative block first hits, take a break for an hour to indulge in your own preferred “energy drink.”



The artist free-form dances in her studio to revitalize her energy during the workday.

My favorite energy booster when I'm feeling drained from work is dancing. Put on some good music and move with whatever beat you feel. That vibration sinks into you, filling up your creative well. Plus—it's fun! Try fifteen-minute physical bursts of walking, jumping rope, or doing yoga—anything that helps you move and breathe.

BE AWARE OF ARTISTIC RUTS

Be aware of getting in a repetitive rut. You unconsciously repeat elements and symbols in your work that become your unique painted language. But if you find yourself saying, “I don't know what to put here, so I'll add a red circle again,” consider consciously trying something out of your comfort zone—a new color, shape, or object. It doesn't mean using a red circle is wrong, but it's easy to get lazy and repeat things that are safe because you know they worked well in past images.

Sometimes your creative block requires more than a fifteen-minute walk to jolt you out of it.

In these times, try turning to a completely different medium or art form. Doing so brings you in touch with new textures, new methods, and new ideas. You'll be forced to figure out how the new medium works, and you won't have time to feel blocked.

If you're comfortable drawing on 8-inch (20 cm) paper, paint on a large canvas for a day. If you normally work in color, try producing some images in charcoal or black ink. Usually a painter? Switch to photography for a day or writing poems. Look at switching mediums as a "creative catalyst."

Recognize your own daily energy rhythms. I personally have a hard time painting in the morning. I can write in the morning, but for some reason my painting feels clumsy and blocked. Rather than forcing myself into an unnatural state, I accept this and work around it.

So take note of your natural energy cycles. Are you tired in the afternoon? Then take a nature walk and hit the drawing board afterward. Take time to ask these simple questions: When do my ideas flow freely? When do I feel most open—morning, noon, or evening? While this might seem like an obvious suggestion, many people lead such overfilled lives, they haven't taken the time to ask these simple questions.



"Every wall is a door."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Working on a large canvas is a physical experience. Try working as you listen to music, painting to the rhythm and beat. Work abstractly at first to free your mind from details.



Here's an array of the artist's handmade dolls that look they stepped out of her illustrations.

WORKING THREE-DIMENSIONALLY FOR INSPIRATION

Perhaps one of the best things I ever did was to sit down one day and create a sock doll for fun. With no plan or preconception of what the end product would be, I eventually found myself holding a creature that looked like it had stepped out of one of my illustrations. The same two-dimensional creatures that were inspired by my real animals were now inspiring three-dimensional characterizations of themselves.

Once I made my first doll, I made more. I often take breaks from painting or writing just to make dolls. Each doll seems to inspire another doll. I also explored working with needle felting my creatures and their clothes.

Consider creating a doll that represents a character in one of your illustrations. Translate its personality into fabric.

Three-Dimensional Formats to Bring Two-Dimensional Characters to Life

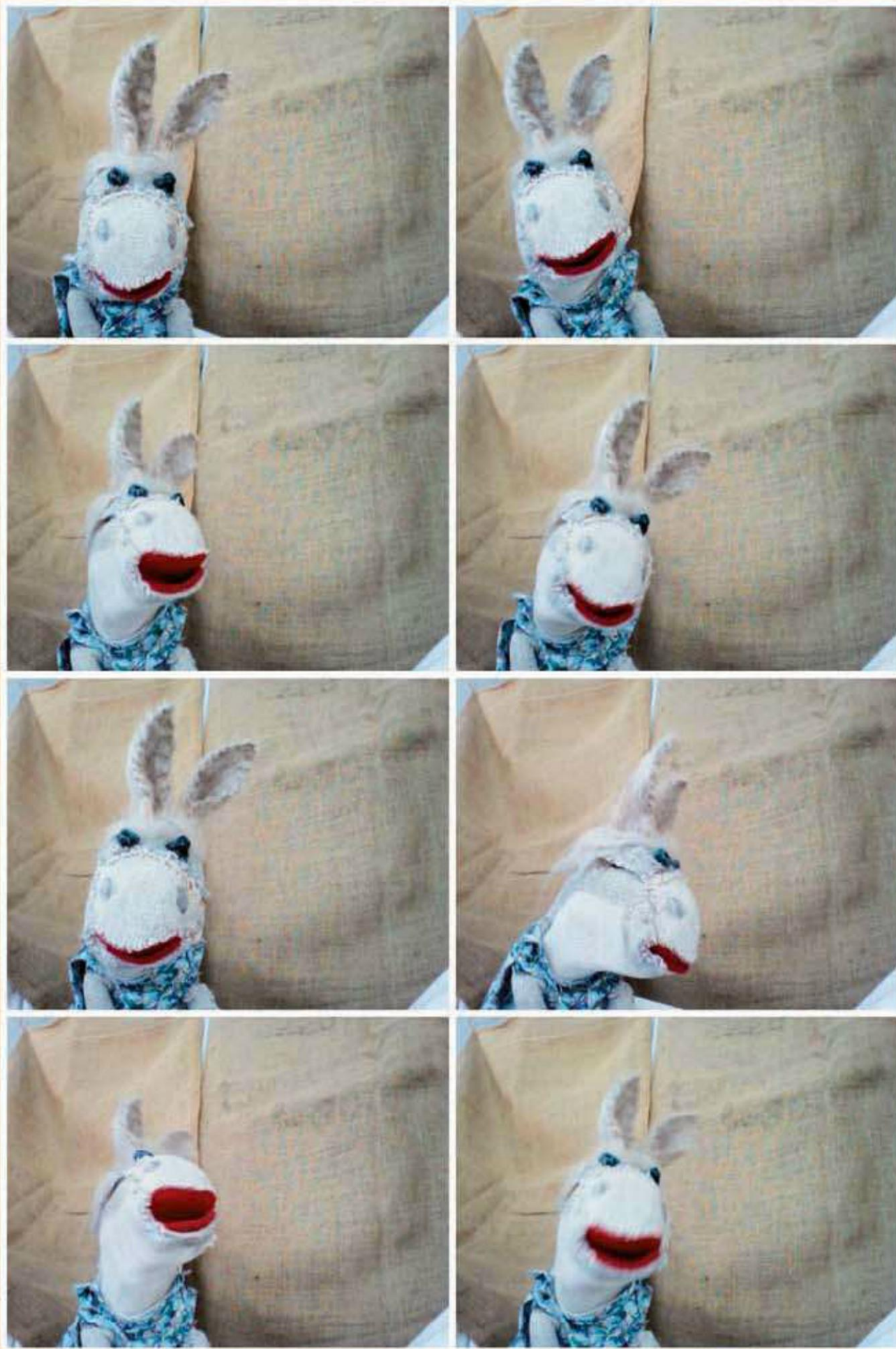


Three-dimensional creatures take on living personalities when you work with them and can inspire characters for your two-dimensional work.

Working in a three-dimensional format you aren't trained in allows you to be a novice. When you've never done something, you seek out ways that work best for you and are more open to taking chances. Working three-dimensionally can lead to techniques that let you apply your style to a whole new body of work.

Once you create your first three-dimensional character or subject, consider moving it around like a prop on a theater set. What stories come from that? That story might just stay in your head, or it might inspire new illustrations.

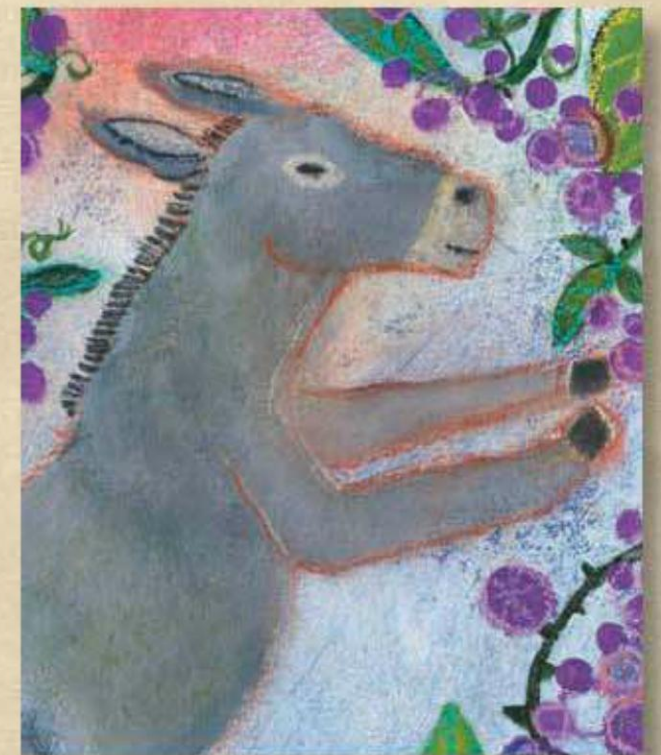
- Try sculpting figures out of clay.
- Carve items out of soapstone or wood.
- Create a stage scene with paper dolls on sticks.



As I worked with my doll creatures, their voices and thoughts developed in my head. That's when the first puppet of Apifera was born. Do you recognize him? The puppets are just one more vehicle for me to share stories. After I make a new puppet, I create little movies of them having a conversation.



The real donkey, Pino, inspired illustrations that inspired dolls that inspired puppets. All inspire stories.



CREATING A SIMPLE PUPPET



Materials needed: one sock, needle and thread (or sewing machine if available), stiff red fabric such as felt for a mouth, scrap fabric for ears and eyes, and cotton or poly batting to stuff head area (or you can use other cotton scrap.)



STEP 1:

Cut a slit in the toe area of the sock. Take your red felt (or any thicker fabric) and bend it to place it in the slit of the sock. Sew this red mouth into the sock by hand or with a machine. You can use a different color, but red shows up well.



STEP 2:

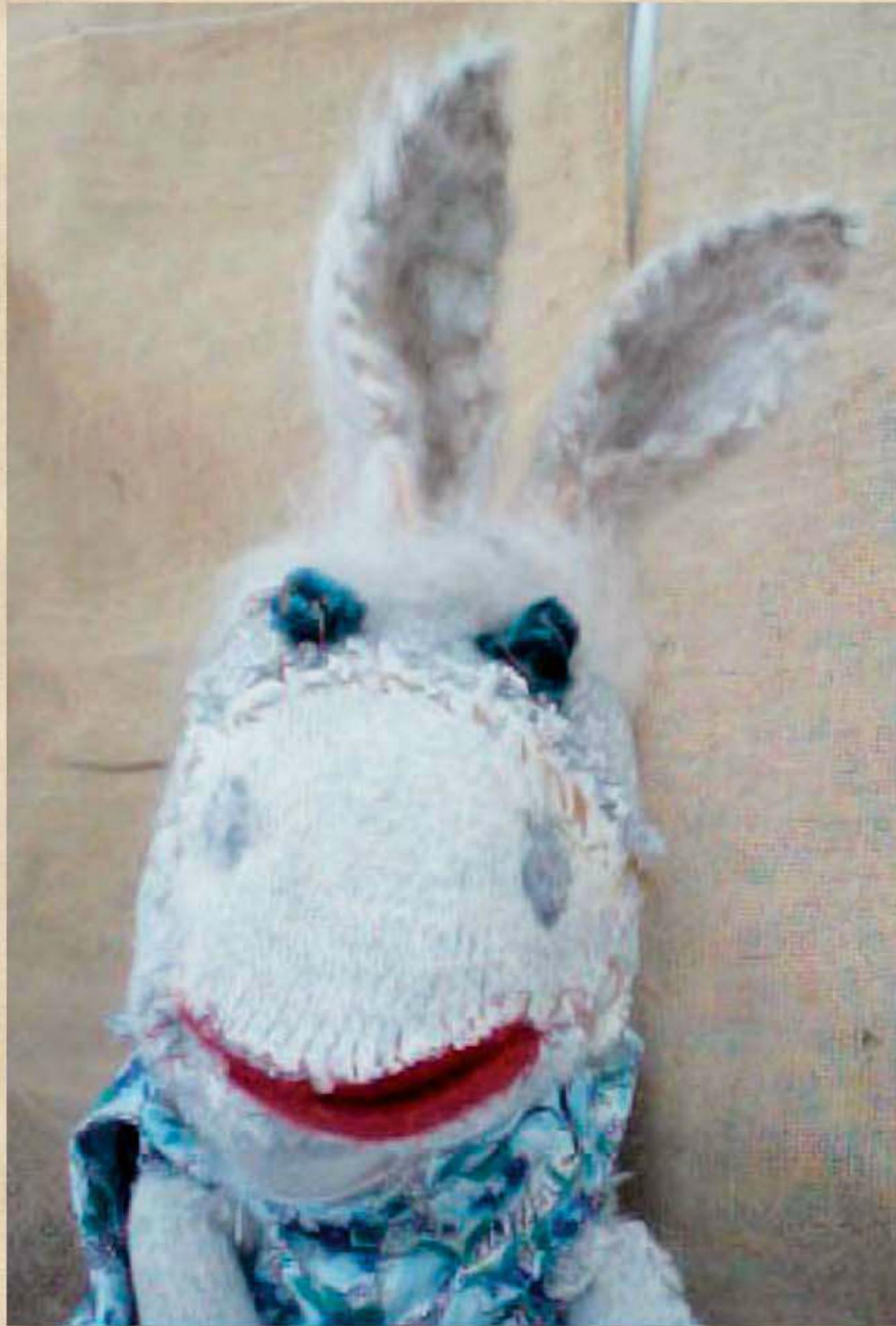
Put the puppet on your hand and just play with it and imagine what features may emerge. Then begin to make ears and eyes.



STEP 3:

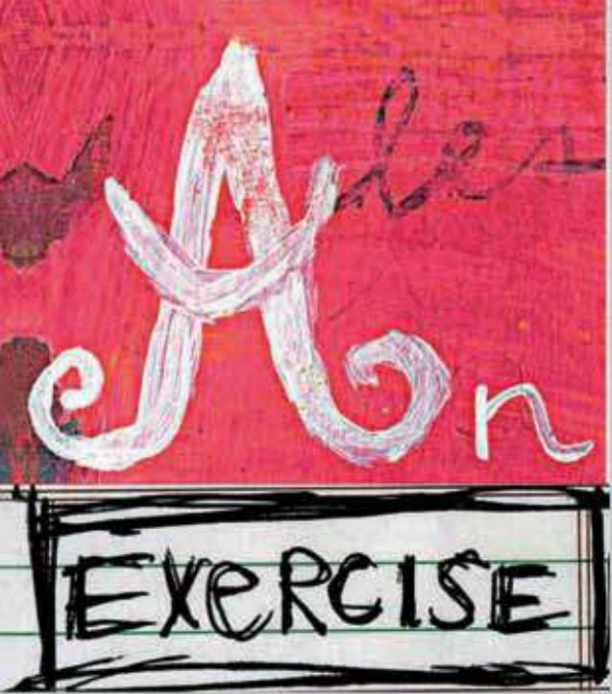
Add your ears and eyes and any embellishments. If you feel the forehead area needs some structure, place stuffing inside the sock at the forehead. You can also wad up old cotton fabric and use it as stuffing.

Puppet making is the antithesis of creative block. —Katherine Dunn



The goat puppet on the left has ears made from an old brown sweater, and the arms are made of old socks. This donkey is more involved. I needle felted the ears separately and sewed them to the head. I also sewed an apron. Your main agenda is to have fun.

"Life's like a movie. Write your own ending.
Keep believing, keep pretending." —Jim Henson



Find a sock. Now go
bring it to life and
share the stories it
holds within.



It's been a long time since I've seen daylight. And it sure is nice to get out of that old drawer and look around at all the things going on in this one room. Oh, here she comes again ... she's picking me up. Oh, I feel like I'm ... alive. I have stories to tell! I can hear my voice again! Oh, it's so wonderful to speak again. And feel myself stretch. To come to life after all that time sleeping in that sock drawer. I'm one lucky sock.



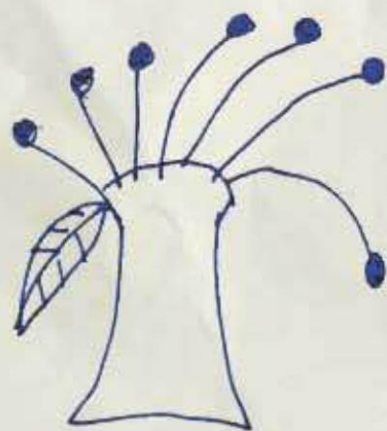
Chapter 7

Gallery of

PROJECTS

In the end, it's your work. You make the decisions, or let's say an entire orchestra inside you makes the decisions. Your art and stories aren't here to please everybody. Please yourself first in the art; then put it out there and the right audience will follow.

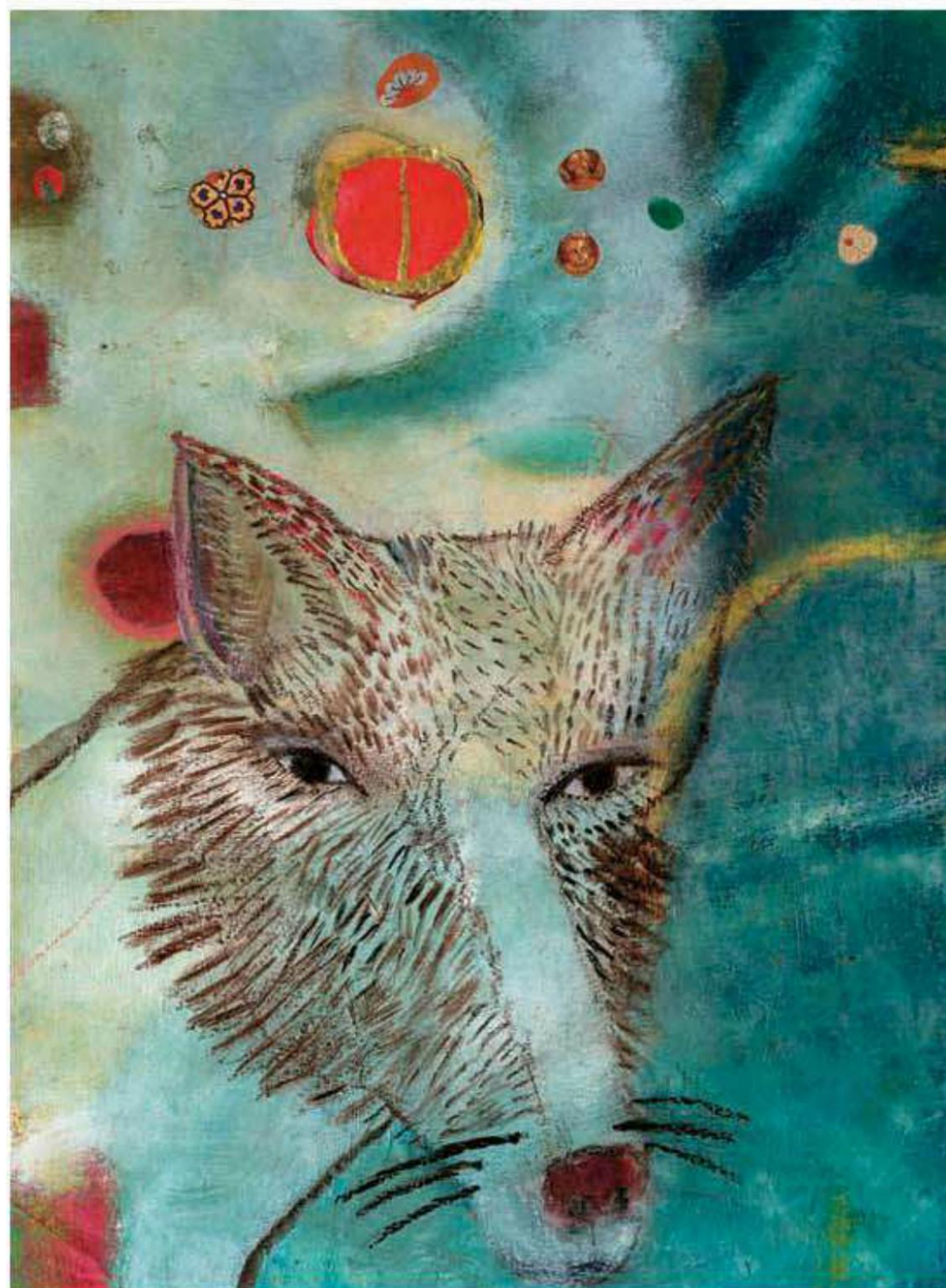
In this chapter I've showcased an array of finished projects for commercial clients, gallery shows, and personal pieces made for myself. The objective of an illustrator is to convey a story, a message, or an essence in images. It can draw a reader to buy a book or help engage them in a magazine article. A greeting card reaches out to your heart, or the packaging on a box makes you feel happy on a dreary day. While there are always design parameters and client needs in any commissioned project, it can still be completed with your unique view of the subject and your special way of creating a story through images.





Avoid Painting Just to Sell

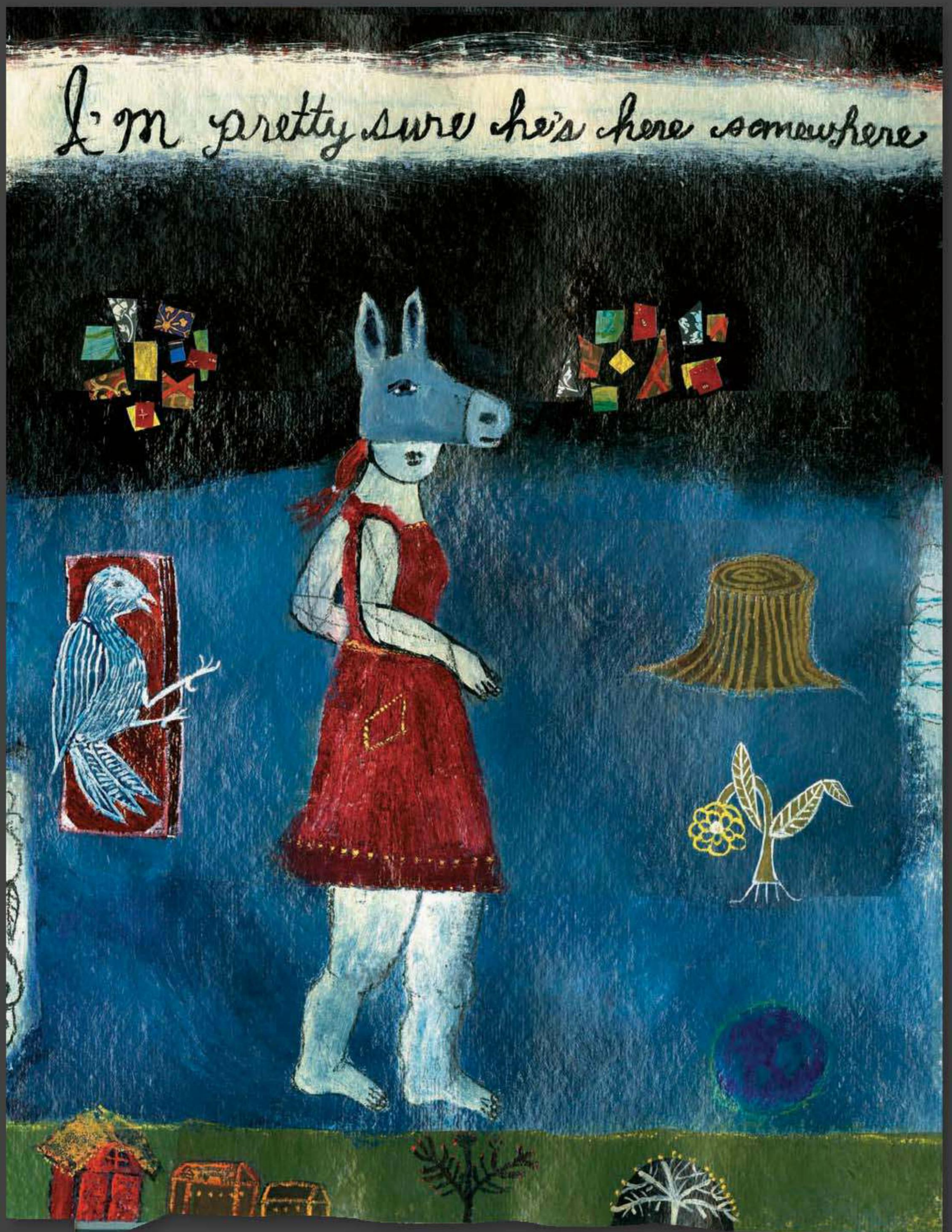
One trap that professional artists can fall into (myself included) is unconsciously returning to subjects that sell well. Working artists have to make a living, but sometimes we can get stuck. Accolades are handed out for “how well you paint red flowers,” for example, and the day you sit down and don’t know what to paint, you end up painting red flowers. This warning doesn’t mean that you can’t paint red flowers, but check your motives for why you decide to paint them on any given day. Is it for you? Or is it because you just sold two paintings of red flowers? One tip that helps me stay fresh and focused on my own muses is to paint a piece one day that you know is good for selling in the commercial market, i.e. red flowers. The next day, paint only what your internal muses are dictating you to paint, even if you think it won’t sell. If your muse tells you to paint about the nightmare you had last night and the colors are dark and ugly, just go with it. Often important work comes from these personal visions.



Fox Guided by Moons (10" x 17" [25.4 x 43.2 cm]). Acrylic, pastel, and collage on heavy watercolor paper | When you live in the country on a farm, the creatures of the night become less mysterious because you see and hear them more. Still, the knowledge that they are guided so innately, something we humans have mostly lost, is a constant inspiration to my work. The moon shapes in this piece are collaged magazine scrap, chosen for their color.

(Opposite)

I'm Pretty Sure He's Here Somewhere (13" x 16" [33 x 40.6 cm]). Acrylic, pastel, and collage on heavy watercolor paper | Originally created for a gallery show called “Somewhere,” this piece has many personal symbols for me, and much of it centers on the process of accepting my father’s death. I find much hope and spirit in this piece, from the lone flower bright in the darkness to the stars and energy in the night. The little color specks are all magazine scrap.





The Donkey Knows (13.5" x 11.25" [33 x 28 cm]). Acrylic and pastel on pine | This was originally created for a gallery show called "Innate Refuge." A person at the opening asked me, "What does the donkey know?" I told him it depended on the donkey. Seriously, the titles of my personal work come to me after I complete them, sometimes days later. Even I don't always know what they mean. Years later when I look at old work, I can sometimes recognize what message was in it for me. If I could discuss and explain every symbol and title in words, I wouldn't have the need or internal urge to paint.



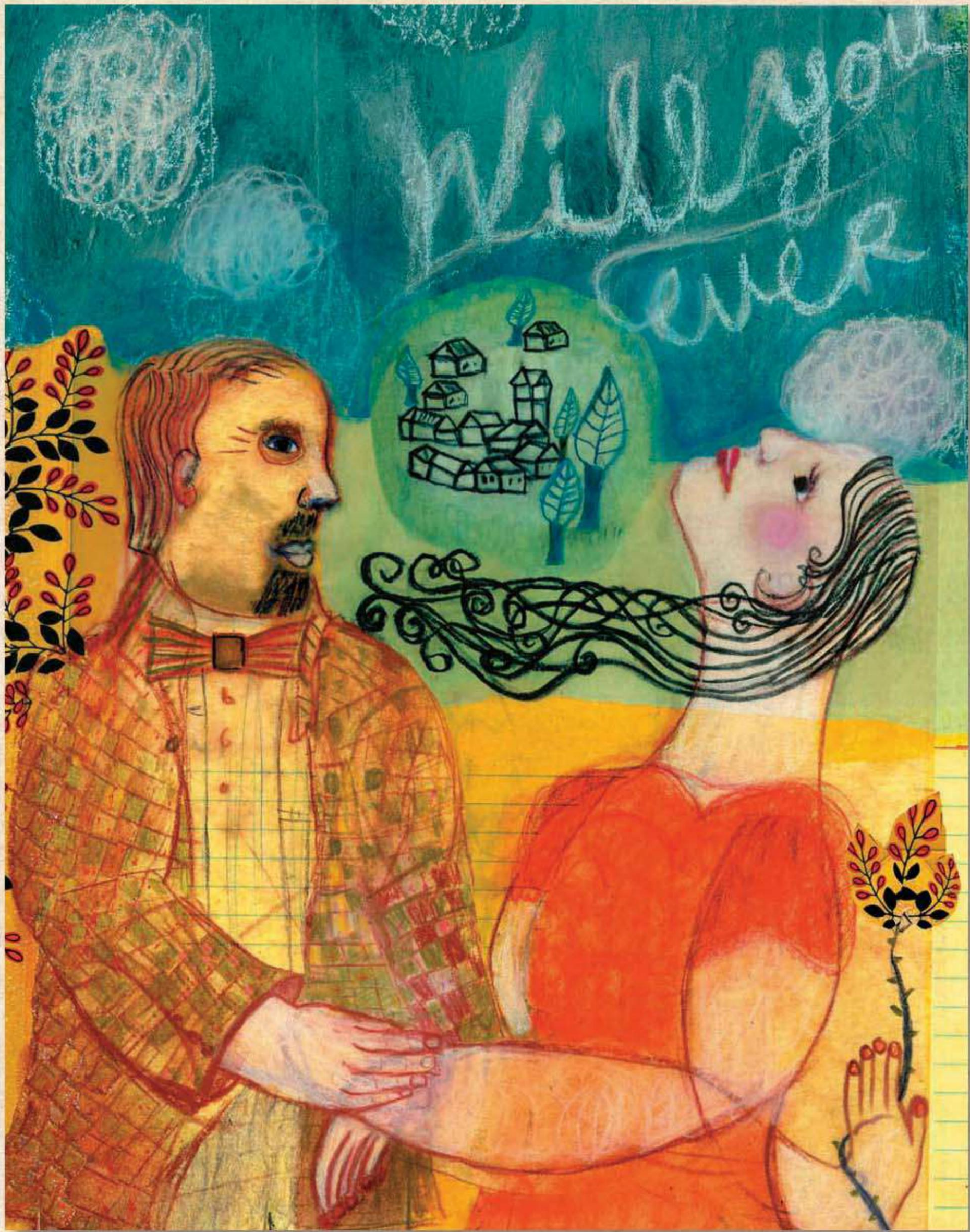
Bird Bike (12" x 15" [30.5 x 38.1 cm]). Acrylic, collage, and pastel on an old kitchen cupboard door | I was asked to partake in a group show that would promote the benefits of commuting by bike versus by car. The ethereal quality of the background is created by many layers of acrylic washes, each drying before another is applied. The sun symbol is collaged scrap, and the linear elements are created with pastel.



I'm Right Over Here in the Corn (11" x 15" [27.9 x 38.1 cm]). This was a private commission for a client's beloved pet, Mose, an old chocolate Lab, who had died months before. I always ask people to write a page about their pet, and then I decide what speaks to me and go from there. After reading through paragraphs about this great old guy, I was drawn to the fact that Mose liked to sneak into the neighbor's field and eat corn. The client left me an emotional message saying that "she just didn't realize Mose was in the corn all this time." This piece is a good example of how you can apply scanned layers of photos and scrap onto an original drawing to create a "digital original." This process is described in chapter 5.



I am often hired to do animal portraits, so I created this composite image of cropped portions of original portraits. Most of the originals of these crops were acrylic, with some collage. For me, the purpose of any portrait is to connect the viewer to the essence of that creature in one quick look. This composite is now sold as an archival print. Proceeds from these prints are donated to help senior creatures at my favorite animal charities.



Commissioned for the *University of Minnesota Alumni Magazine*, this piece accompanied a short, fiction piece entitled “Kalispell,” by Jacob Ellsworth. The story is about a woman who was torn between two men: one stable and doting but in her eyes rather boring; and the other a dashing, flamboyant skywriter, who wrote her messages each day in the sky, much to the humiliation of the other suitor. The main composition of the couple was created traditionally with pencil and acrylic. (8½" x 11" [21.6 x 27.9 cm]). Scans of other drawings were added digitally—the sky, the town, and the decorative floral items.



Acrylic on paper. 10" x 14" [25.4 x 35.6 cm] | This piece was inspired by a story on the radio about two respected, churchgoing women living in small-town America. They had to conceal their lesbianism and their relationship from the small-town conservatives, many of them in their own church. I felt that adding the flag symbol was very important, because so many people were talking about morals and values while brandishing the flag but were unaccepting of perfectly wonderful, caring women in their church.



(All three pieces shown)

Originally created for a gallery show called "*Flight*," all these pieces are acrylic with some collage and are approximately (14.5" x 14.5" [35.6 x 36.8 cm]) in size. Long after they were sold, I licensed the images to *Studio Avo* to be used for canvas reproductions. One original can be applicable to a whole array of markets, so my advice is to never, ever sell your copyright on any given piece.







Being of Service: Visit the Sick, is one of a series of pieces to honor the many ways children can help others. Each piece was created on paper, with acrylic, pastel, and ink, (14" x 11" [35.6 x 27.9 cm]). Note that I touched up each piece digitally by scanning items and using Photoshop. This allows me to add important elements such as the floral curtains that can make the ambiance of the room more complete.



Senior Goat Cocktail Hour was created with conté pencil and acrylic on drafting tissue. I really love the feel of drawing with pastel/conté pencil on tissue; it feels very earthy to me. I drew the goats and animals separately and then gathered scans from other illustrations and merged them into one digital piece (for more on this process, see chapter 5). For example, the trees came from a separate painting. The end result is a print that I send to people who sponsor the farm's three senior pygmy goats.

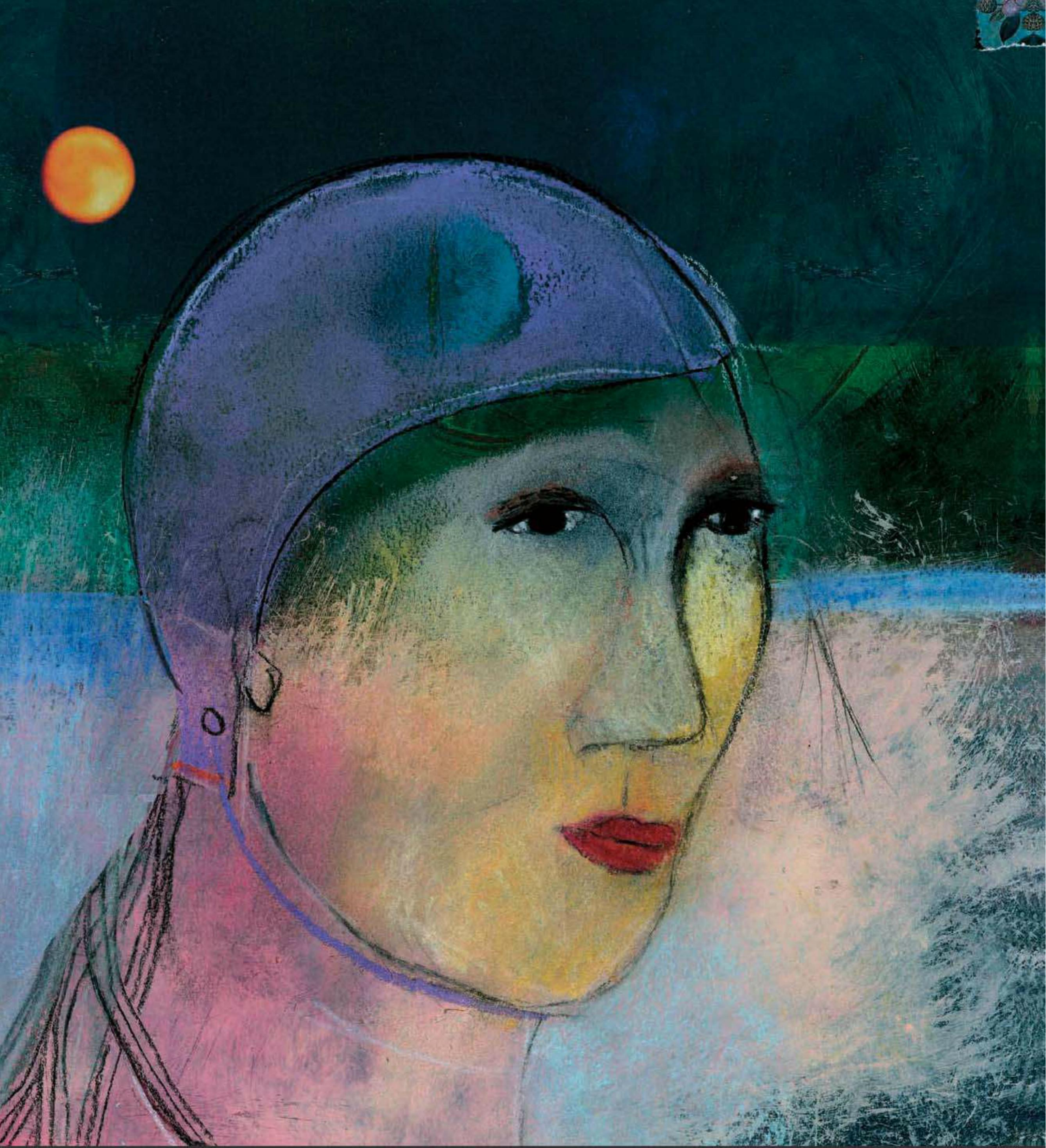


These three fabric pieces were created by taking my original drawings and uploading them to *Spoonflower*, an online resource that takes your digital file and prints it into fabric (see Resources, page 138). I use the fabric to create pillows and sachets from our farm's lavender buds harvested from 4,000 plants. I've also used the fabric to make three-dimensional items such as stand-up dolls and prayer flags.





Originally created for *Neiman Marcus's* holiday issue of *The Book*, the image is now used on a holiday greeting card. I painted gesso on a magazine cover and mainly used ink and pastel to create this piece, along with some collage. The sparkly jewelry is cut from magazine scrap (9" x 12" [22.9 x 30.5 cm]).



Night Swimmer, 12" (30.5 cm) acrylic pastel on archival inked paper.



This was inspired by a story about a woman who disappears after swimming in the ocean. It's mainly pastel, with acrylic, created on an already printed (12" x 10.5" [30.5 x 26.7 cm]) archival print that had an eerie blue/black abstract background. I painted an acrylic wash over the dark surface, let it dry, and used mainly pastel for the images. The moon on both pieces is from collage scrap of a photo of the moon that captured the glow better than I felt I could.

New Year's Couple. Acrylic, pastel, and collage | The majority of this image was created traditionally, but elements were brought into the final illustration digitally. I really enjoy making tiny digital additions that mean so much to the final piece, such as the pipe, dog, and bird.



To Title or Not to Title

Should you add a title to your finished piece? There are different opinions on this. Some will tell you that adding a title to your piece is too suggestive and doesn't let the viewers make up their mind about what the piece means. I find that adding a title "completes" the story for me and have often had viewers tell me they like having a title for guidance.





RESOURCES

PAINTS AND MEDIA SUPPLIES

Dick Blick Art Materials
www.dickblick.com

Golden Artist Colors, Inc.
www.goldenpaints.com

Liquitex Paints and Varnishes
www.liquitex.com

Utrecht Art Supplies
www.utrechtart.com

Winsor & Newton
www.winsornewton.com

PINE BOARD / SUPPLIES/ VARNISH BRUSHES

Home Depot
www.homedepot.com

Lowe's
www.lowes.com

CUSTOM FABRIC

Spoonflower, Inc.
www.spoonflower.com

SHIPPING SUPPLIES/CARDBOARD

U.S. Box Packaging
www.usbox.com

FRAMING

United Mfrs. Supplies, Inc.
www.unitedmfrscatalog.com

CAMERAS AND SCANNERS

Canon
www.usa.canon.com

Epson
www.epson.com

HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR ARTISTS

Golden Artist Colors, Inc. Environmental Guidelines
www.goldenpaints.com/healthsafety/environ/index.php

Liquitex Safe Studio Tips
www.liquitex.com/healthsafety/safestudiotips.cfm

Find places to recycle paints and more earth-friendly tips
www.earth911.com



Acrylic, collage, pencil, and pastel on pine board (12" [30.5 cm]) | Note how certain more-detailed areas are created in pencil: the hands, and leaves, the mouth.



Many brands of pencils and pastels are available. I use Rembrandt pastels, Faber-Castell pencils, and Carrés contés. All can be found online at the stores listed under Paints and Media Supplies, page 138.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Artist Katherine Dunn lives on Apifera Farm in Yamhill, Oregon, where she is surrounded by her favorite muses—animals and nature. While her paintings travel internationally to get to their new owners, Katherine takes refuge on her farm, away from the chatter of the world's chaos. Outside her studio she watches a flock of sheep just up the hill from the lavender field. Donkeys bray on a hill, chickens scatter, and an old goat rests in the sun. Her paintings and illustrations tell the stories she sees each day, with an emotive, bittersweet quality.

Raised in Minneapolis in an artistic household, Katherine's tastes for art were flavored by her architect father's travels and her occasional studies abroad. She began painting seriously in her late thirties, choosing to work as a freelance illustrator. Eventually her heart was pulling her west, and she moved to Oregon in 2002, where she eventually met her husband, a landscaper. They established Apifera Farm in 2004.



"Someone recently described my work as a combination of melancholy and hope and I think that is accurate."
—Katherine Dunn

WWW.KATHERINEDUNN.US

WWW.APIFERAFARM.COM

WWW.APIFERAFARM.BLOGSPOT.COM



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people, creatures, and entities to thank. Fortunately, I have an entire page. First, I'd like to thank my editor, Mary Ann Hall, for the guidance and insights she has given me throughout the book. And thanks also go to Quarry Books for giving me the opportunity to write this book.

Each creature that's come into my life has taught me about the beauty and power of nature. A self-entertaining unit since my first days, nature has always been my muse. I won't name every bird, leaf, tree, or rain shower, for they know who they are.

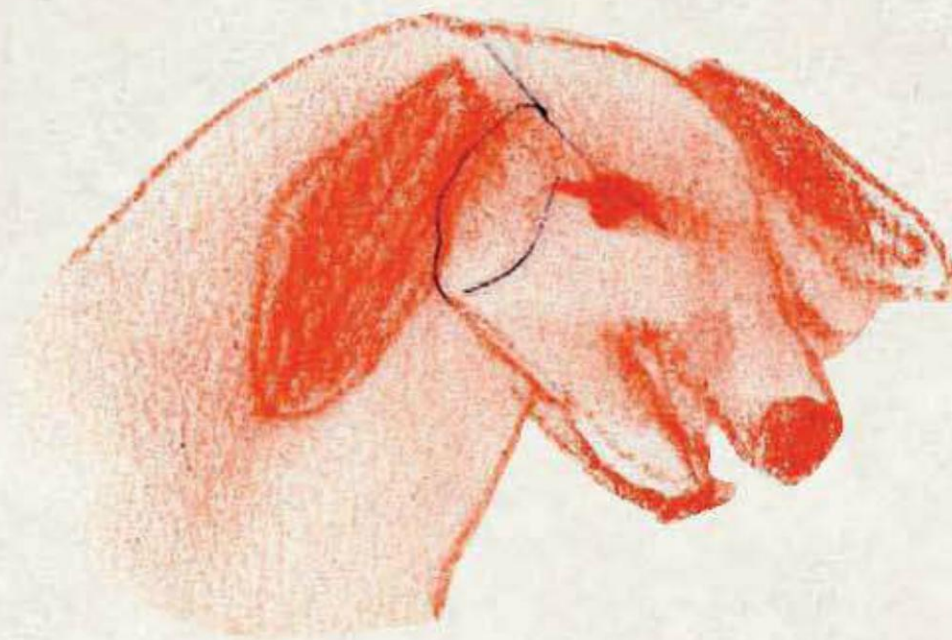
Thanks to my parents, who encouraged my art. I wish my father could see my first book, and I thank him wherever he is for surrounding me with art books and art supplies when I was young.

Special thanks to my many artist/writer compadrés from all over the continent who share emails, visions, and thoughts as we muddle through life. And thanks to the many followers of my blog, who show love and admiration for Apifera Farm and all its creatures through kind gestures.

To Martyn, my very gentle and loyal dirt farmer—without you, Apifera Farm would fall down. Thank you for watching my puppets sing, cooking meals of nourishment while I write, and chopping the wood to keep us warm.

To the many creatures of this farm—each of you, be it winged, big eared, or one eyed, bring me meaning, nourishment, stories, and companionship. You teach me.

And finally, to this place called Apifera. Do we exist without each other? I think not.

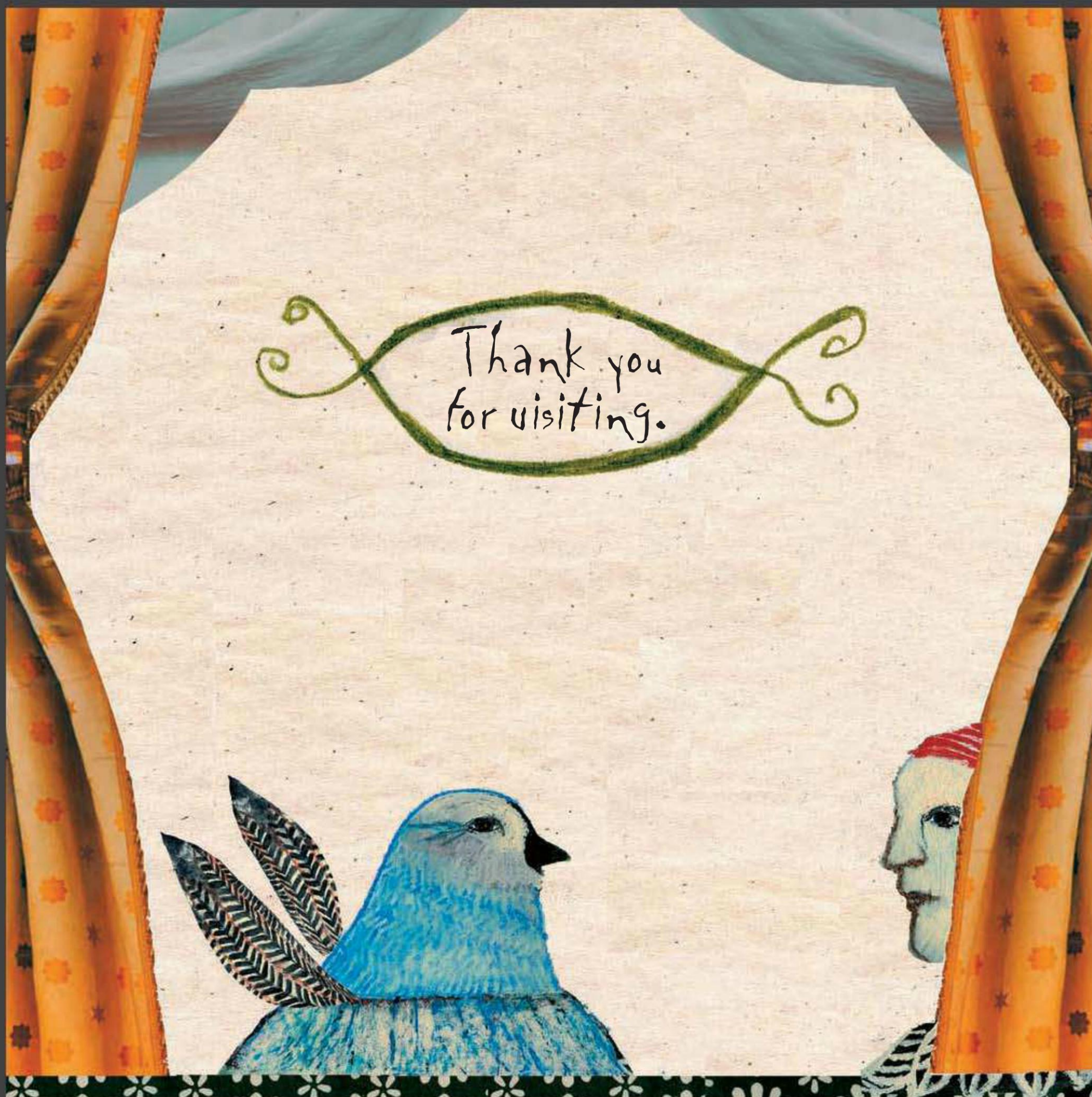


*I'd like to thank
all the trees too
their leaves know
more than I do.*





PLEASE DON'T ENTER



And she went off and painted some more.